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OUR PUBLIC OFFICES.

EMBODYING AN ACCOUNT OF THE
DISCLOSURE OF THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT
AND THE UNREVEALED SECRET TREATY OF
MAY 31ST, 1878.

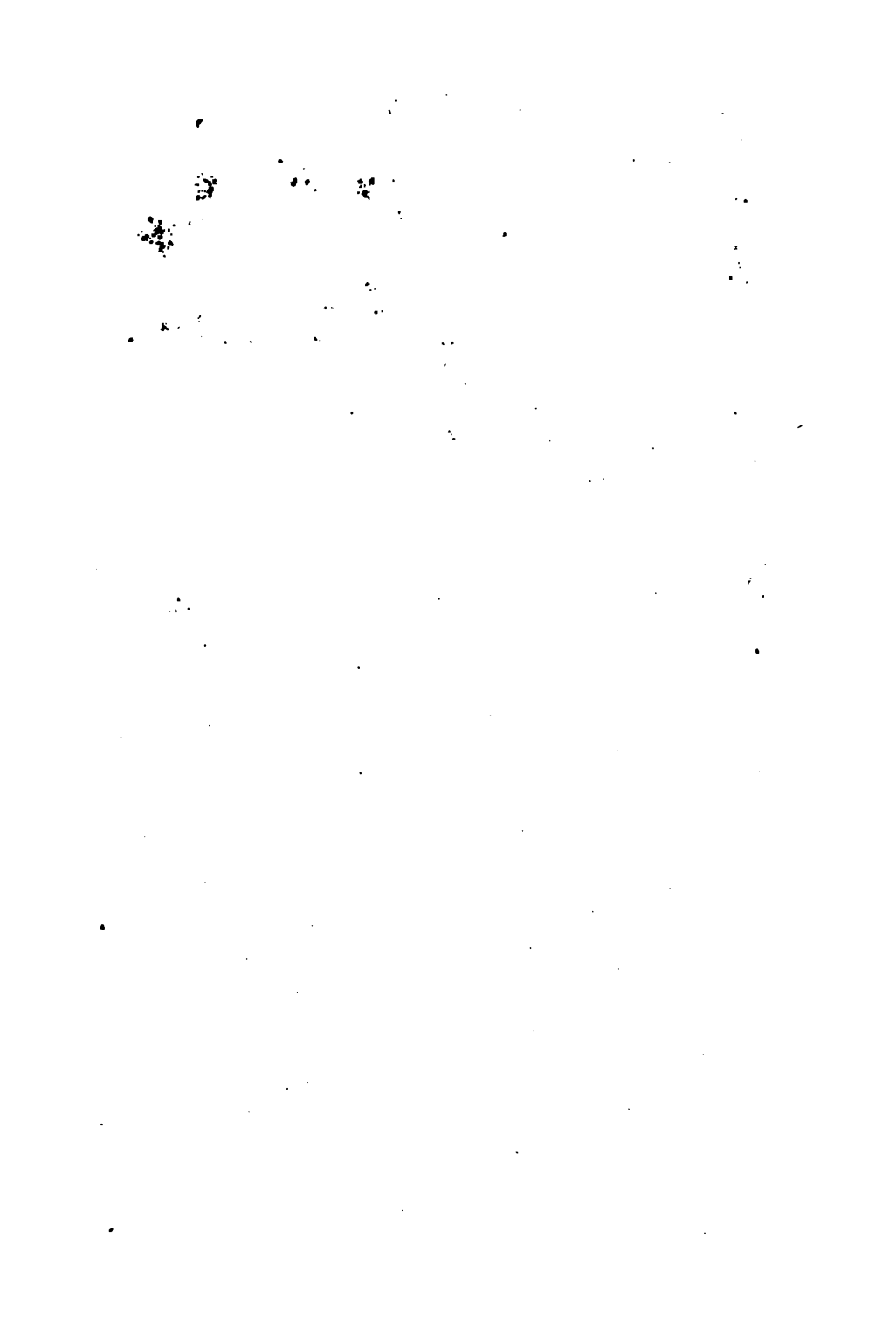
BY
CHARLES MARVIN,
FORMERLY OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

'O what a world of vile ill-favoured faults looks handsome in three
hundred pounds a year.'—MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.



London:
SAMUEL TINSLEY & CO.,
31, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.
1879.
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232. f. 241.



'WHO DO GOOD BY STEALTH, AND BLUSH TO FIND IT FAME.'

TO

MY BENEFACTOR,

CAPTAIN HAMBER,

EDITOR OF THE 'MORNING ADVERTISER,'

AND THE

DISCLOSER OF THE DISCLOSER,

I Dedicate these Pages,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM.

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OUR PUBLIC OFFICES.



FIRST WORDS.

IN 1875, ophthalmia necessitated my return to England. During my six years' residence in Russia, I had traversed 25,000 miles of the Czar's dominions, and had visited such centres as Wilna, Moscow, Tamboff, Nijni, Kazan, the Oorals, and Orenburg. I had also acquired the Russian, French, and German languages, and for eighteen months I had acted, at St. Petersburg, as correspondent of the *Globe*. My determination in returning to England was to attach myself to the Press; but, at the time to which I refer, Russia was a dull subject in the columns of our newspapers. The endeavours of five months to contribute Russian articles to

periodicals, only resulted in filling my boxes with rejected manuscripts ; and my efforts to get into the City were, from the depressed condition of trade, equally barren of success. Thus, when, one morning, the suggestion was thrown out to me, that instead of eating the head off my capital, I should earn thirty shillings a week as a Writer in the Civil Service, I gladly acted upon the advice, and wrote to the Commissioners, offering my pen to the Crown.

In that letter, which is still in their possession, I acknowledged my previous connection with the Press. I had no idea, at that period, of the constitution of the Public Service, and entertained a fond belief that merit would find scope for advancement, now that the days of nepotism were over. Buoyed up with this illusion, I willingly responded to the Commissioners' invitation, and, at ten o'clock one Wednesday in December, presented myself, with a number of other individuals, at Cannon Row, to undergo the regulation 'exam.' In this manner, the chain of incidents led up to my becoming a Writer.

THE ORDEAL AT CANNON ROW.

THE crowd that was gathered on the broken steps, and under the grimy portico of the shrine of the Civil Service Commission, numbered some three hundred individuals, ranging in age from eighteen to fifty ; and in *status*, from the careless youngster, fresh from school, to the staid and respectable bookkeeper, six months out of a job.

Every degree of broken fortunes was represented in the throng, and a glance was sufficient to assure the keen observer that most of the would-be writers were men who, under no circumstances, would display the force of character necessary to enable them to fight their way out of the mire. Fellows in misfortune, they lounged about in twos

and threes, and chatted with each other till the basement-door was opened. Then a batch trooped in. As soon as the motley herd was seated, officials came round with bundles of printed forms, two specimens of which were served out to each competitor. The one form was a sort of agreement that we should observe the rules of the 'exam.,' and required, in a blank corner, our signature and a five-shilling stamp. The other was a species of passport return, in which we had to fill in those particulars which the inquisitive Russian police usually demand of the indignant stranger.

Such minor details as our name, address, and education were speedily filled in, but I observed a general feeling of resentment at the impertinence of the Commissioners in demanding of each candidate: 'When he entered situations Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.,' 'why he left,' 'what he earned,' 'how long he was out of work between whiles,' and a variety of other nonsensical particulars, which, in my own case, took a quarter of an hour to describe; being compelled, under divers penalties too dreadful to mention, to disclose

that I had been employed in a City warehouse before emigrating to Russia, that I had acted in Russia as companion to a nobleman's son, as teacher of languages, as assistant bookkeeper, as traveller, etc., etc.; all of which, I later on discovered with indignation and disgust, afforded amusement to a number of fourpennies* employed in the dingy apartment overlooking Westminster Station where the writers' passports are kept.

If it is necessary that the Commissioners should pry so deeply into the antecedents of a man whom they hire to do casual work at tenpence an hour, the least they could do would be to keep such information under lock and key.

The task of filling in the forms over, we were bundled out of the building till one o'clock. Precisely as the bell of St. Stephen's boomed the hour, the door was opened afresh, and the shady three hundred, now reduced to two hundred and eighty, the remainder having scornfully refused to answer the commissioners' biographical inquiries, shuffled

* Boy clerks earning fourpence an hour.

into the building and took up their seats at the candidates' desks. As soon as the competitors had settled down in their places, the ordeal began.

Papers to test the handwriting of the candidates, their orthography, their ability to decipher manuscripts, and their facility in dealing with long columns of figures and tabular statements, were handed round at precise and regular intervals. The obligatory subjects finished, a number of candidates took their leave, not wishing to undergo the optional ordeal in arithmetic. The latter comprised a test question or two from every rule in Colenso, and was not a difficult performance, although, so far as I was concerned, I was floored in several of the sums concerning weights and measures, having forgotten the English standards during my absence in Russia. At five o'clock the examination ended, and every candidate went away fully impressed with the belief that he had been submitted to four hours' very grievous hard labour to earn the right of being a 'menial' Tenpenny.

The Ordeal took place on the 15th. A

week later, a letter informed me that I had successfully 'passed,' and that a certificate of birth, and a medical certificate, would be required of me. Ponderous forms, full of small print and perplexing inquiries, were also despatched to all my late employers and referees. A fortnight afterwards, I was asked to describe minutely my last employment, and forward my testimonials. Then I had to go to Cannon Row to be told to keep myself in readiness for any vacancy that might turn up. Finally a notice arrived, ordering me to present myself at the Custom House at ten o'clock the following Monday morning ; and thus, after this mighty incubation, I issued from my shell on the 10th of January, 1876, a full-fledged Civil Service Writer.

THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.*

OLD CHUFF'S.

OLD CHUFF's was situated at the fishy end of the Barnacle Office in Thames Street, and, for ought I know, exists there still. It was a dirty, low-pitched room on the fourth story, and reeked with the odours of Billingsgate, whiffs of which, accompanied by porters' cries and fishwives' oaths, came in at the opened part of a window above Old Chuff's head. There was a slimy ooze upon all the windows (the dying sweat of the fish below, it seemed to me), and, on the day of my first arrival, a mute appeal to be freed from dirt stood out in bold relief from the centre one, upon the panes of

* Portions of some of these articles appeared in *Mayfair*

which, with clumsy smear, had been marked by a clerk, 'Clean me, if you please.'

The triple row of desks was ink-worn, battered, and dusty; frowsy ledgers lay scattered before each seat; a huge press gaped open, and showed rows and rows of dusty tomes, all more or less frowsy, and in this respect bearing a strong resemblance to the Barnacles assembled, who I noted, as Old Chuff read my credentials, were all of them in a frowsy condition of manhood.

The patriarch of the department, Julius Cobbeldick, Esq., less elegantly denominated 'Old Chuff' by his subordinates (why, I do not know), was a man of sixty, of ample proportions, with a burly head fringed with reddish hair, and shallow eyes overshadowed by a perfect forest of eyebrow. He at once gave me the impression of having been in his time a schoolmaster, though nothing transpired in our subsequent relations to lead me to believe that he had ever followed that pursuit. At any rate, pedagogue-like, he acted the part of Sir Oracle, and always spoke as a judge in every knotty point that

disturbed the even flow of office conversation. He mostly enunciated his ideas with an ebony ruler in his hand — Old Chuff's sceptre, irreverent Barnacles called it—and whenever the silence was broken by a remark from Hobble or Ransom, the burly head of the patriarch, with its rugged pink-skinned features, set off with tufts of red, would bob up, like a Jack-in-the-box, above the foolscap paper stacked on top of his desk, and Solomon stood arrayed before us. The Senior Clerk had such a happy belief in the boundlessness of his wisdom, that he would argue on every subject, from the size of a sun-spot to the ancestry of Fe-Fo-Fum, and considered himself equal to the discussion of any event that had happened since the Creation, or, indeed, before it.

To Mr. Cobbeldick my credentials introduced me as a temporary writer from Cannon Row ; and these being found in due form and proper order (a mere formality, because they had been already scrutinized by the Registrar, the Secretary, and the Secretary's messenger), Old Chuff assigned me a vacant stool at a desk the most remote from his

own, whence, from the adjoining window, was a picturesque view of Idol Lane, terminating in the lofty snow-white belfry of St. Dunstan. A book of statistics, full of tiny addition sums, was given to me to operate upon. I was as green as grass respecting the Barnacle system of 'How not to do it,' and I fell upon the rows of 'tots' with the same vigour that had been drilled into me seven years previously by the warehouse hands in Watling Street. On raising my head half an hour afterwards, I discovered every Barnacle except the Senior staring at me with eyes expressive of the deepest astonishment and pity. I resumed my work unconcernedly, stimulated thereto by the prospect of some day becoming (all things are possible to the Man of Destiny) Secretary of State for the Colonies, or Autocrat of the Omnipotent F. O.

Suddenly a slip of paper fell upon my book ; the writing on it ran thus : ' A nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse—don't work too hard !'

I put the suggestion into my pocket, and pitched into the addition sums with greater

energy than ever. My zeal was unbounded (like all zeal thirty minutes old), and I continued my work like a Titan.

Another flake fell upon my book : 'Why work so desperately hard? nobody works hard here!' 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' I said to myself, and resumed my work as though I were afresh in an entering desk in Watling Street, and a nimble 'counter-hand' were 'calling over' a parcel as fast as his tongue could rattle.

In a few minutes an angry voice sounded in my ear :

'For God's sake, man, don't work like that; you'll have the whole office against you, and you won't do yourself a bit of good.'

'Indeed!' I said dryly.

'Yes, it's a fact. Hobble's got to give you the next book when you've done, and he won't be ready for you before next Saturday.'

I looked at my book. I could have finished it that day at the rate I was then working. How was I to kill the remaining five days? I demanded.

'How?' was the rejoinder. 'Why, look

about you, read the papers ; do a bit and rest a bit. If you don't, all the fellows in the Barnacle Office will be dead nuts against you.'

I had no desire to incur the enmity of my colleagues so soon after entering the public service, and sundry passages in 'Little Dorrit' having risen to my mind, I began to look about me. Thus I learnt my first lesson in 'How not to do it.' I began to look about me. I have since discovered that to look about one, and to daily grumble at the parsimony of a stingy public, are the chief two occupations of Her Majesty's Barnacles.

In looking about me, I found, with the assistance of my friend, the devil's advocate, that the staff at Old Chuff's consisted of five clerks and half-a-dozen writers. Let me describe them by the light of my after-knowledge.

Next in seniority to Old Chuff himself was Timothy Slowboy, an ancient man in threadbare clothing, who looked as though he had never changed his apparel since the day, thirty years previous, he had first passed

into the precincts of the Barnacle Office. I believe he occasionally did some work, though its volume was never apparent, and the impression I formed and retained of him was, that he spent the morning in making mistakes, and the afternoon in scratching them out. His chief occupation appeared to be to wander listlessly about the room, or gaze vacantly at the press (I have seen him do so hours together), or act as a human fire-screen. Sometimes he would forget his position, and then the office would be suddenly aroused into state of violent excitement by a smell of singed coat-tails. He very rarely spoke to any one, he never asserted his dignity, and he seemed to me to be as empty of brains as he was of speech.

The third in rank among the Barnacles was Ransom. His forte was to act the contentious man, and to play the part of a diluted Cobbett. He had a few bald ideas (six or seven, I am not certain which) which daily came out of his mouth as regularly as his meals went into it, and he spent the major part of his time chirruping inane utterances, which no one but Old Chuff, who used him

as his lay figure to lecture at, could have possibly tolerated. He did about an hour's work a day, and thought his labours gigantic. This latter belief was shared by Speechkey, a selfish mortal with sandy mutton-chop whiskers and a shiny bald head, who spent three of his official hours in thinking about his dinner and three in digesting it, and who was always ministering to the thousand and one small ailments which he had acquired in the course of an indolent, stagnant career.

The remaining clerks were Hobble and Poppingay. The former was an oldish fellow—everybody was old in Old Chuff's department—and afflicted with the gout; who travelled every June in the Pyrenees, and talked about his exploits the rest of the twelvemonth; who spent more of his six hours in inditing his voluminous private correspondence than in doing public work; and who took an active part in the numerous indignation meetings which were then being held (in Government hours, of course) to protest against the rascality of John Bull in paying only £300 to Thames Street Barnacles to look about them and do nothing. Com-

mittee friends (the Barnacle Office was honey-combed with secret committees conspiring to get more money out of a parsimonious public) were continually paying him visits to discuss their grievances against the common enemy ; and, in accents trembling with passion (say at three o'clock in the afternoon, and they had not yet done a stroke of clerical work), would demand of each other what the country meant by reorganizing the West End branches of the Circumlocution Office and passing over the Barnacles of Thames Street, the hardest worked men in the service, who were starving on the execrable pay of £300 a year, and had only the miserable prospect of rising to £500 a year, and retiring on a pension.

Poppingay was a shining instance of an ancient maxim, that the best of men are sometimes found in the worst of company. Whether it was from conscientious principles he had deliberately accumulated six hours' hard labour for himself, or whether it was an instance of that higgledy-piggledy arrangement in the Service which throws excessive work in the path of a conscientious man, and allows half-a-dozen indolent Barnacles to

skulk, I do not know, but I speedily observed that he had a deal of papers to go through every day, and that he was kept fully employed from the moment of his arrival to the time he went away. Being of a taciturn disposition, I did not associate much with the Barnacles, and above all with Poppingay, who was also reserved. But though I did not exchange half-a-dozen words with him the whole period of my sojourn at Old Chuff's, I acquired a sincere admiration for his honesty and kindness of heart; and even now, as I write this, I see his handsome face beaming with an approving smile at the jests of Robinson the Writer, or darkening with anger at the Senior Clerk's infidel interpretations of the Bible. He was the single redeeming feature among the Barnacles, and the only clerk at Old Chuff's whom I should care to know or to work with again.

Besides the Senior Clerk and his five 'established' subordinates, there were half-a-dozen supernumeraries. Three of these were permanent, and the remainder temporary, writers.

Penderling was the leading man of the former. He was a little, sharp-witted fellow,

who eked out Her Majesty's 'thirty' by acting as a commission agent to all manner of things that didn't pay, and led to a deal of canvassing and correspondence. Before I had been in the place twenty-four hours he had offered to insure my life ; to sell me a patent razor ; to stock my wine-cellar (the bottom drawer of my wardrobe) with superior pale sherry ; to supply me with coals below the market value ; and to furnish me at a remarkably low figure with a tin or two of patent bone manure for the plants in my study-window.

Crumpet, the second writer, was a broken-down, wheezy bachelor, who was utterly done for so far as this life was concerned, and did not seem to stand much of a chance for the next. He belonged to that very large class of men among the writers, and perhaps among other vocations also, who are always drinking, yet never drunk.

Sikes, who occupied a seat next him, was a boy of twenty, very green, very impertinent, and 'sweating' for a 'second-class exam.' He out-Barnacled the Barnacles in the noble art of doing nothing ; and I could not help ob-

serving to Penderling shortly after my arrival, that if he only passed the regulation 'cram' he would be an honour to the profession of which *dolce far niente* is the true and expressive motto.

During the first six months of the year, when Old Chuff was getting ready his export 'tots' for the edification of political economists, the gigantic labours of the Barnacles necessitated an appeal for help to Cannon Row; and, in January, the department was invaded by nomads, nicknamed in the service 'Tenpennies.' These varied every season. On this particular occasion it fell to my lot to come in with the rush, and to reinforce the flagging energies of the 'established' men. Accompanying me were three other temporary writers: Chucklehead, Robinson, and Barlow. The former of these was a lanky noodle, who had passed into the Barnacle Service Heaven knows how, and who played such ducks and drakes with the import figures that, at the end of the week, Old Chuff had to send him back to Westminster, labelled 'incapable.' If he was unfit for the simple addition sums we had at Old Chuff's,

you may guess he wasn't fit for much else where.

But herein lies the beauty of the Barnacle Service. It puts a premium on incapacity; and, if it makes a mistake now and again in getting rid of a man of merit, it always sticks fast to its noodles. In less than twenty-four hours after Chucklehead had left Thames Street, he had been pitchforked into a permanent job in Parliament Street, where he received 35s. a week instead of Old Chuff's 30s., and became a shining instance of how boobies get on in the Barnacle Service. The second 'Tenpenny' was Robinson—a man who had seen better days, who knew French fluently, had travelled all over North and South America, and who took such a domineering part in every discussion that arose, that, being well armed with a mass of facts, and having an iron tongue, he nearly talked poor Old Chuff into fits before he went away. It was no use the Senior Clerk uttering dogmatic nonsense if Robinson the Writer was there. Robinson shut up his flow of nonsense with, 'Stuff, sir; nobody entertains such views as those.' And when, one day, Old Chuff tried

to make out to Hobble that the Bible was a bundle of old women's fables, Robinson swooped down upon the Senior Clerk with a torrent of indignation which came strangely from the lips of a man who had gambled away his wife's last love-trinket in the hells of California, and who drank brandy neat as you and I would drink water. The remaining writer was an organist out of employ, who had taken her Majesty's 'thirty' as a means of keeping the wolf from the door till he could get another job. He really did his work well, and was worth a dozen Chuffs, although the senior Barnacle's abilities were gauged at £450 per annum.

Such were the actors that strutted upon the little stage in the Thames Street garret, before the Disclosure of the Anglo-Russian Agreement. It was curious company. A motley assembly of men drawn by the hand of Fate, to dingle-dangle for a few short months before myself, and then to disappear and to be replaced by other actors. How the farce of 'How Not To Do It' appeared to Robinson, who was fresh from the busy gold diggings of California, I know not ; but to me, who but a

short while previous had been galloping with Bashkirs and Kirghizi over the broad stretches of meadow-land at the foot of the Oorals, so free and so untrammelled with the bonds and shackles of a frowsy civilisation, the performance was a strange and curious sight.

This was the outline of the play.

The Clerks and the Writers signed the time-sheet at ten a.m., and, after five minutes' grace, it was taken into the Secretary's room, where tardy Barnacles had to endure Sedley's cutting gaze, if late in coming to Thames Street. The ledgers were then brought out, for sake of appearance, and afterwards everybody buried himself behind a newspaper till eleven o'clock. If the morning news happened to be of an exciting or contentious nature, Old Chuff's head would rise like a harvest-moon above his desk, and would start a discussion in which Barnacles and Writers freely and promiscuously joined, until the subject was exhausted, or Chuff had nothing more to say. Some of the Barnacles would then go down to the bar (Britannia had provided thirsty Barnacles with a handy refreshment-room) to have a 'wet,' or visit other

Barnacles slaving for fame and fortune in the six other offices side by side with Old Chuff's rookery. After their return, the staff would begin to work in a desultory manner, alternately doing a few rows of figures, and then plunging into a disengaged portion of one of the numerous newspapers that lay scattered about the desks. In this style we would go on till half-past twelve, when, three at a time, the Barnacles went out to lunch. As a rule, each took half an hour for the mid-day meal, but very little was done during the interval between half-past twelve and half-past two, when, the last Barnacle having returned, work would proceed in a dawdling manner for another hour. A vast amount of soaping and toweling was then called into action to remove the grime engendered by the Herculean labours of the day, and, precisely as the hand of St. Dunstan's reached five minutes to four, the stairs of the office became alive with the noisy clatter of feet, and the Barnacles joined their friends the Whelks in Thames Street.

Do not imagine this to be a fancy picture of life at Old Chuff's. I declare it to be the

actual, unvarnished truth. There were times, it is true, when the Barnacles, excited by an urgent demand for totals from the Secretary, would display an unwonted invasion of vigour, and four hours out of the six would be devoted to statistical work. But energy of this description was the exception, not the rule, and was followed by a large accession of overstrained Barnacles to the already plethoric sick list. The complaint from which the Barnacles suffered the most was the 'all-overs,' a malady which among workmen is more coarsely described as the 'skulks.' It always raged the fiercest between January and June, which was reputed to be the busy season, although, in reality, it was the slackest half of the year. As this sounds somewhat strange to non-Barnacle ears, I had better explain it by a short reference to the writer system.

When a Barnacle begins to fancy that he has too much work to do, he puts his interest and the machinery of the department into operation, and the result is that a writer is brought from Cannon Row to help him. The clerk, having discovered the luxury of putting

his work upon an assistant's shoulders, is prone, like all of us, to stick to that enjoyment as long as he can ; and, unless the head of the office peremptorily interferes, the temporary copyist speedily becomes a recurrent feature in the establishment. This was the case at Old Chuff's. At some prehistoric period, when the number of established clerks had been too few for the work of the place, the services of several writers had been called in. But now, in spite of their being no longer needed, four tenpenny fellows always came in at the dawn of the year (by a fiction, supposed to be Old Chuff's busy season), and there remained until the money voted for their maintenance had dwindled away.

As a set-off against the pound foolishness in having writers at all, was the penny wisdom displayed in binding them down to their tenpenny bargain. A Barnacle might be away weeks or months together without any detriment to his pay, but so surely as a writer left Old Chuff's thirty minutes before his time, or entered the office half an hour late, fivepence was rigorously deducted from his weekly one-pound-ten. More ridiculous than this petty

injustice was the Barnacle law with respect to the writer's supply of stationery. No matter how extensive or how confined his work might be, a writer was only allowed to receive so many sheets of paper, so many folios of foolscap, and so many black and red ink pens. I think that the number of pens per month was fixed at twelve, which, under certain circumstances, was altogether insufficient, but the tape-mad Head of the Sealing-Wax Office was inflexible in refusing to give a further supply, and I well remember the sensation occasioned by Robinson, who, having used up his twelfth pen on the twenty-fifth day of the month, went down to the obdurate Barnacle, and, with appropriate oaths, threatened to proceed in person to the Board of Commissioners if fresh nibs were not instantly forthcoming to enable him to carry on his work to the day of the next supply. The clerk turned white. It was a tremendous responsibility to hand over two magnum bonums to a writer, in excess of the regulation number. But delay was perilous. His imagination recoiled against appearing before the Board in that faded necktie (confound it!) he had unfortu-

nately put on that morning. So, with an impressive air of conferring a favour on one who did not deserve it, and with sundry adjurations to be less wasteful with the public money, the Barnacle opened the stationery store and gave Robinson what he wanted.

* * * * *

The work at Old Chuff's consisted chiefly of the adding up of small entries in a number of export return books, and transferring the totals into fresh ones for other departments.

There was a slight amount of training requisite to know how to pass on the totals from one book to another, but not more than an assistant bookkeeper's clerk would have learnt in the course of his first day's labour. The country, however, had awful notions of the responsible labour performed at Old Chuff's (perhaps originally conceived in the time of Charles II., to which era the ledger series dated back); and thus it had come to pass that the value of the work had been gauged as follows :

	£
The Senior Clerk	450
Six clerks, salaries from £200 to £350 per annum	1,700
Three permanent writers	234
Three temporary ditto, half-year	117
Total	£2,501
Excluding pension allowances.	

The work I have shown to be of the simplest character, such as in Watling Street would be given to the junior clerks earning £50 a year. A city bookkeeper, with £300 a year, and three juniors, with salaries commencing at £80, working eight hours a day (not playing six), could easily have accomplished at an expenditure of £700 or £800 a year, what taxed the *dolce far niente* of thirteen able-bodied men, and cost the country £2,500 per annum.

You will imagine that the gradations in rank and pay implied commensurate gradations in work. You will fancy, for instance, that old Slowboy, having £350, did higher work than Penderling with £78. Wrong; utterly, irretrievably wrong.

What will you say if I tell you that the organization of the work of the department

was confided to that asthmatic hack, Crumpet, and that the wheezy writer actually knew more about the business than even that sagacious old gentleman, Chuff? You will declare it to be absolutely impossible in these times of public enlightenment and common-sense, and will set down my assertion to a distorted fancy, cribbed from Dickens. In reply, I tell you that it is a genuine, indisputable fact, and if you will catch a writer in other departments of the public service, and sound him on the subject, you will find Old Chuff's case neither so extraordinary nor so exceptional as you may at first imagine.

In a word, then, the tritons and the minnows did identical work in Old Chuff's office, and Crumpet not only gave me my work to do the whole time I was there, but he also issued instructions to Hobble and the rest! The labours of the permanent staff were chiefly of a 'current' character, while those of the temporaries were placed in the category of 'jobs.' For instance, Old Chuff would give an outport-book to be added up, and the writer would retain possession of it until the promptings of an enraged conscience

compelled him, in common decency, to return it again. Then Old Chuff, glancing over the top of the *Times*, would sing out, 'All right; Crumpet will give you a job directly.'

Sometimes an hour would pass, or an entire morning, before the Senior's shadow had evolved a job from his inner consciousness, and, in the meanwhile, the tenpenny would regale himself at the bar, or refresh himself with a run into the City.

An earnest man might have thought that the Barnacles would have scorned to have received their work at the hands of a writer. But self-respect is an absent quantity in the composition of Thames Street, and besides, the system relieved the former of a deal of bother and responsibility. It enabled Slow-boy to gaze unrestrictedly at the books in the press, and Hobble to check, without interruption, the accounts of the Barnacle 'Co-operative Toothpick Supply Association' (Limited—especially as regards income-tax). It was better, also, every way, as the Writer was less often absent, and therefore could manage the office better than the Barnacles. Crumpet was only allowed twelve days' holiday

a year, while Hobble took a month. Crumpet never wanted to go away early, because, if he did, the Barnacles stopped his pay. He never wanted to go on sick-leave, as his salary ceased during his absence ; and thus, Crumpet being incessantly at his post, Hobble and the rest could take their weekly holiday and their monthly sick-leave without having to trouble themselves as to how the work would go on in their absence.

* * * * *

It was some time before I found out, from repeated conversation, the conditions of the service to which I had become temporarily attached. Penderling put these before me in the strongest light, in a chat we had one March morning, while Old Chuff was discussing with Hobble the influence of prehistoric folk-lore upon the morals of Billingsgate. We had been talking about the Tchinovniki in the Barnacle Office on the Vasilli Ostrof, and in describing the tea-drinking cigarette-smoking Custom-house clerks at St. Petersburg I expressed myself thankful that merit, not nepotism, was the *mot d'ordre* in this country. I said, I hoped in time to

work myself up to £300 a year, and to have leisure then for the avocation that lay dear to my heart.

‘A vain illusion!’ interrupted Penderling, ‘and totally unattainable. You have no prospects whatever in the Service. Look here’—drawing a blurred line upon his blotting-paper—‘all above the line are established clerks. They are either the remnants of the old school, who owe their posts to somebody’s influence when they entered the service, or else they are representatives of the new regime, admitted by means of the competitive “exams.” They can rise to any position; nay, they must rise, whether they like it or not, because seniority prevails. Below the line are the writers—permanent like me, or temporary like you. We start at thirty shillings a week; we work thirty years at the same rate, and in the end we are kicked off like old shoes with neither pension nor thanks. You are a few months too old to enter the service above the line by means of passing a second-class examination—the only door of admission nowadays—and you consequently must always remain a writer.’

‘But Merit!’ I exclaimed.

‘Merit is a term not recognised in the Civil Service. Advancement above the line proceeds by means of seniority or incessant reorganizations. Below the line there is no advancement, and the only recognition the writer receives for his ability or good conduct is, that when he leaves the office his discharge papers contain the word “good,” or “excellent,” or some other inexpensive adjective. Do not delude yourself with the notion that your qualifications will ever raise you in the Service. The competitive system is fossilized by Act of Parliament, and between the clerks and the writers exists a gulf as impassable as that separating Heaven from Inferno.’

It does not do to accept a fact upon the assertion of one man. I therefore put the case to a ‘temporary,’ employed in Tuttle’s Branch. ‘It’s quite correct,’ he told me. ‘I have been bandied about like a shuttlecock for more than three years. I have been at the Mint, the British Museum, Post Office, Somerset-House, Sergeant’s Inn, House of Commons, and half-a-dozen other offices. I

have acquired a score of "excellents" "very goods," and what-not, and here I am to-day with only the prospect of being shunted afresh to Cannon Row on the first of May or June.'

All this was concurred in by a Barnacle who overheard the conversation. The same was repeated to me with greater cogency by the Secretary.

It happened that years previously a relative of mine had been a Barnacle in Thames Street. Lord Bloomfield had put him into the place, and my name had thus awakened old recollections in the office, and had led to my being summoned into the Secretary's presence. He expressed his satisfaction at meeting the nephew of a former colleague, whose name was still so respected in the office; and, in thanking him for his courtesy, I expressed a hope that if I displayed merit I might also rise to the position my uncle had held at his death. He shrugged his shoulders.

'Indeed, no!' he said. 'I am sorry to have to undeceive you, but you have no prospects here. No service, however pro-

longed, will give you a claim upon the office. It is unfortunate for you, I can well imagine, but it is no use to encourage false expectations.'

My visions of a few years' labour being rewarded with a snug little billet of £200 or £300 a year, and leisure for literary work, all vanished. The administration of my country was closed against me.

I had to choose now whether I should suffer the Service to make a slave of me, and reduce me to the level of Crumpet or Penderling, or whether I should use the Service as a means of furthering my advancement outside its boundaries. My mind was soon made up. I accepted the latter alternative. Henceforth, I candidly admit, I did as little as I could for the Barnacles, and as much as I could for myself.

I read the newspapers till eleven. I worked till half-past twelve. I then studied till two. Dinner took up till three. I worked till half-past, and then read again till four. I always worked at high pressure, and was consequently able to keep my totals above the level of those of the Barnacles. I hated dawdling over

work, and considered it a matter of right, that if I did as much in two hours as the rest of the Barnacles in six, I had a legitimate claim to the difference. But for my keeping myself constantly occupied, I should have sunk into the sluggish condition of Slowboy or Ransom. I had to battle fiercely with the tendencies around me to preserve myself from becoming a dawdler and a slug.

The luncheon-hour was the pleasantest in the day. Originally of half an hour's duration, it became extended after my chat with the Secretary to an hour, and later on to an hour and half. This afforded me abundant time for rambles over the Tower, for excursions to the savage regions of the East End (more wonderful than any place in barbarous Russia), for jaunts into the City, and for pleasant saint's-day morning services at St. Dunstan's, or at that exquisite temple of Christopher's—St. Mary-at-Hill.

In this manner my few months with the Barnacles passed away very pleasantly. Enjoyment is made up of incessant variety, and by judicious diversification of study and pleasure I

found I could spend life as pleasantly on the meagre income of tenpence an hour in Thames Street, as on thrice that sum with a luxurious nobleman's family in Russia. When the warmer weather came round, and the April Sun drove off the heavy fogs and fishy damp that gather around Billingsgate, the writers began to migrate to other quarters. One by one they dropped off from Tuttle's Branch and Old Chuff's, and at last I was the sole survivor.

Then my turn came. Towards the close of April the Secretary summoned me into his room, and expressed his regret that he should have to part with me. The Custom-House, however, was not disposed to deal harshly with its *employés*, and, in accordance with the rule observed, I should receive one week's grace before being turned adrift. For this unexpected generosity of the Office I thanked Mr. Sedley profusely, and with a few words of regret that the Custom-House could not avail itself permanently of my talents I withdrew. The following Saturday I took my leave of Thames Street.

SECOND WORDS.

THE Monday following, the first in May, I proceeded to Cannon Row. A long passage intersects the building from the Cannon Row pillars to the Board-room overlooking the Embankment and Westminster Bridge. On the ground-floor are waiting-rooms, examination-rooms, and a few departments. On the upper floor, poked away in all manner of inconvenient chambers, are the grimy desks of the officials employed in controlling the supply of Barnacles for the public service. By rights, on account of its recent origin, the Civil Service Commission should be the most advanced and public-spirited of all the Government departments. Practically, however, it is the most tape-mad

of them all, and has a staff composed of the seediest clerks and wretchedest writers that one will find anywhere in the Civil Service. It is the old story of the cobbler's children going unshod. The Commission keeps the residuum of the service supply to itself.

A messenger took up my card to the secretary. On his way he showed me into a waiting-room, a dingy apartment containing two long forms crowded with writers. At the side of the table was a chair belonging to the boy-messenger. I took advantage of his withdrawal to answer a summons to assume possession of this seat, and on his return I sent him for a pen and ink and some foolscap. When these were brought, I took Pitman out of my pocket and began a lesson in shorthand.

Before eleven o'clock had been struck by Big Ben there were thirty writers in the room. Many of them were youths preparing for a second-class examination. A few were middle-aged men, with the word 'hack' written in every feature of their face. The remainder were City clerks out of a job. One by one they were summoned to the Registry-

Room, and then furnished with fresh appointments, or sent empty away.

The last left was a vacillating ex-shipping clerk about twenty-five years old, and apparently of the Christian-Young-Man persuasion. For some minutes he walked restlessly up and down the room, and at length expressed a hope that something would 'turn up' that morning.

'I've been kicking my heels about this hole for a fortnight,' he continued, after a few remarks. 'There's not a breath stirring. I can't get a fresh job in the Service, and I tried a dozen places in the City last week, without success. If I don't get a berth soon I shall ship to the Colonies, hanged if I don't!'

'You would only be worse off there,' I said, 'unless you cared to throw off your collar and cuffs and turn up your shirt-sleeves. On my part, I tried by letter twenty places last week, and failed to elicit an answer. I have written fifty letters since Christmas without being successful in any. I might certainly have accepted a situation or two in the provinces, but I have laid siege to



London, and shall remain before the walls till I succeed.'

'Ah—till you succeed. A long time that.'

'I don't know. Everything comes to the man who waits. I am prepared for five years of failure, and if I am still unsuccessful at the end, I shall have acquired patience for five years more.'

'I should go mad before then.'

'What! you a member of a Christian community, and talk like that! Where's your faith? where's your patience and longsuffering? I myself, I must admit, am very shaky about some of the Thirty-nine Articles; but if my religious opinions are loose, I have unbounded belief in my Destiny.'

'Ah, but Destiny's not bread-and-cheese.'

'No, I know it's not. It is a champagne banquet compared with such sordid make-shifts. Faith is everything in life. It is my faith that after a certain probationary period of failure I shall enjoy commensurate success. How long that period will last I do not know. Destiny will unfold itself some day. One thing I am positive of—the day will

come when I shall have my innings, and in the meanwhile would it not be ungrateful of me, who have been born with this belief, to torment and to worry the Trainer ?

Before my pessimist friend could answer my inquiry he was called away by a messenger. A few seconds later he returned, and ruefully said :

‘The same story—nothing stirring to-day. Good-bye, I shall meet you here to-morrow. You are sure to get nothing this morning.’

‘Mist—er Mar—vin !’ bawled the boy-messenger, a foot from my ear and the door.

‘All right. You need not make my name known all over the building.’

So saying, I followed him to the Registry-Room, a dirty place tenanted by three shabby clerks and a writer. A monster press, occupying the whole of one wall, exposed the passports of all the writers in the service.

‘Will you attach your signature to that paper,’ said the elder of the three, whose breath was unpleasantly odorized with the morning bread-and-cheese and ‘bitter.’

The document was headed ‘Specimen of

handwriting.' I filled in 'Charles Marvin,' without the usual flourish. The Registrar blotted it, and enclosing it in an envelope with several other papers, presented it fastened to me. On the outside of the packet was the address :

 'The Secretary,

 'Inland Revenue,

 'Somerset House.'

 'Nothing like Destiny,' I said to myself, as I walked away.

SOMERSET HOUSE.

AMONG THE DOGS.

WHAT a transformation scene it was to find myself removed from the fish-shambles of Thames Street to the more salubrious surroundings of the Strand ! The blank wall, saturated with smoke, of the Thames Street Barnacle Office, which had deadened my artistic taste for so many months, was now replaced by the handsome stone structure devoted to taxes, and fitly situated side by side with that monument of Rennie's, Waterloo Bridge. Instead of being down in a hollow, with Dutch-built boats and oyster-barges, and almost suffocated by encroaching stores and warehouses, I was now the occupant of a building which reared its

lofty front grandly above the Embankment, and pushed out its shoulders imposingly into two great arteries of West-End traffic. In place of the yells, the curses, and the screeches of fish-hags and waterside harpies, rendering the morning walk along Thames Street or Custom-House Quay a suggestion of the Inferno, there was the capacious quadrangle with its massive stone barriers to deaden the hum of respectable trade in the Strand, and the soothing sight of broad-gowned undergraduates pacing, book in hand, up and down the quiet pavement fronting the fountain.

Inside the office, the doors were not guarded by antiquated beadles, but by that friend of the taxgatherer, the policeman; the corridors were wider, the smells were sweeter, and partook more of the odour of parchment and stamped paper than of stale fish and sawdust; the stairs were not covered inch-deep in mud and slime, but were as bright and as clean as a cottager's doorstep; and in place of decayed out-port officers in seedy uniform guarding secretarial doors and avenues, there were decent, middle-aged men,

intelligent and active, and attended by hordes of small boys, each with the badge of office fastened upon his arm.

There was no longer the foggy feeling that I was living in an antediluvian structure which had failed to get rid of the mud and the smell of the Deluge, nor yet the peculiar sensation of fearing lest the building should carry out its waterside proclivities to the extreme by dropping down the river to Gravesend in quest of luggage or ships to search, and getting stranded afterwards among her Majesty's bonded warehouses.

The era of elderly men, imbecile fossils and nothing to do seemed wholly a thing of the past, and I said to myself, as I surveyed the activity around me : ' Well, if the Barnacles at Somerset House do not earn their salaries they certainly have a different way of cloaking their indolence to that pursued at Old Chuff's.'

One of the boy-messengers took charge of my credentials at the door, and piloted me through the building to the secretary's office. On either side of the ground corridor were spacious rooms devoted to the purchase of

spoiled stamps, to stamped papers, to public inquiries, to cashiers and controllers, and to registrars of every vital and fiscal subject connected with British humanity. At the end, a well-worn staircase led to the first floor, at the top of which was a man in black on watch. My Mercury handed him my papers, and I was just about to add my card, when a jovial voice was heard shouting in the neighbouring room :

‘ Messenger, ahoy !’

‘ All right, sir !’ answered cheerily the messenger in black, quitting his cosy sentry-box. ‘ It’s the Admiral, your honour, the gentleman you wished to see.’

Pushing open a spring-door opposite his box, he led me past a baize screen into a lofty and commodious room, well lighted, with two huge windows looking out into Wellington Street. Faded buff-coloured curtains and clean white blinds shaded the apartment from the sun, which that morning was hot and glaring, and cast a mellow tinge over the countenance of a nautical gentleman, standing perusing a bundle of foolscap reports at a desk furthest from the door. Two other

desks, one with an attendant table covered with unwieldy registers, and the other bare and devoid, apparently, of an occupant, took up the remaining space in the room, while opposite the window a huge press gaped open and showed rows and rows of massive drawers brimming over with official reports.

On the left-hand side the wall was pierced with a window, consisting of a large pane of stained glass, and affording a passage for the transmission of documents into the contiguous chamber. At the side of this was a cabinet with one of the doors open, revealing desirable stores of stationery, such as stacks of quills, mounds of glittering penknives, heaps of magnum-bonums, piles of red tape and sealing-wax, with a tempting assortment on the bottom shelf of fancy inkstands, paper-knives, piercers, rulers, and other clerical gear common to a public office.

Flanking the Admiral's desk was another press with glass doors, through which could be seen dusty tomes labelled 'Collectors' Reports,' 'Dog Cases,' 'Inland Revenue Returns,' and many more similar works of a

serious and statistical nature. There was an air of luxury about the place, expressed in soft carpets, cushioned chairs, and polished furniture, which contrasted sharply with the bare boards and meagre, ink-stained desks at Old Chuff's, and the room, although used only by clerks of the second degree, was superior even to that sanctum sanctorum in Thames Street, the Secretary's own apartment. West-End refinement had found its way into Somerset House as clearly as the office in Thames Street had failed to escape the contagion of its vile surroundings.

The 'Admiral,' or rather Mr. Cooper, as the man in black termed him in his presence, gave a rapid glance at my Cannon Row credentials, and then remarked, glancing somewhat sternly over his spectacles at me, as though I were a middy on quarter-deck for the first time :

'You are the writer we applied for to assist Mr. Gadfly, I perceive. This, sir, is your apartment, and you will consider yourself for a while established among the Dogs.'

At this juncture a florid-faced, downy-whiskered, broad-shouldered little man, age

about twenty-eight, and habited in a gaudy, ginger-coloured lounging suit, rushed into the room, pushed the messenger aside, and pounced upon a huge pile of papers that lay resting against a register. To whom the Admiral remarked in the same severe, grave tone of voice :

‘Mr. Gadfly, sir, here is your colleague ; this moment arrived to assist you.’

The little man rushed at me with a batch of papers in his hand, ejaculating hurriedly : ‘Happy—make—acquaintance.’

He then shook my right hand forcibly, whisked away the hat from my left, rammed me into a chair in front of a ponderous register, and implored me to write for my life.

What followed afterwards is a confused mist in my memory, which not even Stokes himself could unravel. I have a faint perception of his standing near me with a huge batch of papers, gabbling over the names and addresses ; of my working with quills that wouldn’t write, with magnum bonums that would do nothing but blot, and with hands that refused to impart the necessary velocity

to my fingers; of my tearing across page after page of that atrocious tome, making blunders and correcting them, getting into the wrong columns and on to the wrong lines, appending wrong initials to the wrong entries, losing my place times out of number, and then losing my temper and Gadfly's also; of my starting afresh with a vague sense of incapacity, stupidity, and hatred of my tormentor, feeling sure I was going to break down every five minutes, and tearing on again doggedly with every nerve in my body protesting against such hot-headed haste, until finally, panting, trembling, and almost bursting with suppressed indignation and passion, my pen fell mechanically from my fingers, and I heard the little man exclaim with a chuckle to the Admiral:

‘There! two hundred and fifty Dog cases got rid of, and done by a quarter to two!’

‘At what a cost!’ I thought to myself, as I pulled together my scattered senses, and woefully bethought myself of the easy, cosy routine at Old Chuff’s. ‘If this is the way they work at the Tax Office,’ I inwardly re-

peated, 'I shall earn my tenpence an hour with a vengeance.'

Mr. Gadfly, having arranged his papers in half-a-dozen baskets, and despatched them by different messengers to various committee clerks, proceeded to attack on the side-table a succulent chop and tankard of foaming 'bitter,' which Tommy, the boy messenger had brought up from the refectory on the basement. The Admiral had already finished his luncheon—a nautical one composed of biscuit and grog—and was now talking through the casement to a young man with a weak voice, whom I overheard to be Sefton, the clerk in charge of the 'Carriage cases.' Mr. Cooper himself had charge of the correspondence embracing queries respecting dog and carriage licenses; and this he performed in a quiet, steady manner, at his prim, narrow-fronted desk, that showed he had long lost the exuberance of youthful industry. A minor but lucrative branch of his duties, I afterwards heard, was to deal out stationery to the clerks in the secretary's department. For this he received, besides his regular £500 a year, duty-pay to the extent of £50, which

was not bad remuneration for the trouble of opening his stationery cabinet about two or three times per diem.

In accordance with my invariable custom (founded on the maxim that variety is the charm of life), I went outside the building to dine, and on returning half-an-hour later, was subjected to another bout of hurry-skurry-drive-me-mad quill-driving, which lasted till three o'clock. I was then permitted to take up the quieter pursuit of indexing, while Gadfly went off to read the *Globe* in the Carriage department. My occupation gave me leisure to look about me, and to undergo, at the hands of the 'Admiral,' frequent introductions to portly committee clerks and dandified juniors.

To one and all I had to narrate what I knew of the wretched Barnacles in Thames Street, for whom the Somerset House men entertained a profound and laudable pity. They could not understand how human beings, blessed with the divine prerogative of Barnacles, could possibly submit to attend an office at ten precise, when they themselves had the option of signing on at half

past ten, or arriving an hour later. Far worse was it for the Barnacles at Thames Street to have to sign off at four, when they themselves were spared that absurd formality. As for their filthy office, their inferior pay, and their stagnant prospects, such things suited a class drawn from Kentish Town and Greenwich, but it would have been only flying in the face of the essential fitness of things to have accorded to Thames Street the same comforts and luxuries which the superior social caste at Somerset House received from a benignant West-End system.

‘It was impossible,’ I was told by Committee Clerk Blister, ‘to expect good men to leave the Strand behind them. Even the Barnacles at St. Martin’s le Grand lost social esteem by daring to enter the City, and if this was the case with them, what was the fate to be expected of pariahs who ventured as far as the Tower. The purity of social life demanded that they should be cut off, root and branch, from the fellowship of higher circles, and allowed to sink with ignominy and contempt to their own dull level.’

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It was some weeks before I became thoroughly acquainted with the system of prosecuting people for keeping unlicensed dogs, but at length my mind grasped the scheme, with its attendant irregularities, and I grew as expert in dealing with the 'Dog cases' as the registrar, Mr. Gadfly, himself.

Let me briefly describe the machinery of prosecution.

As soon as a district revenue officer becomes cognisant of a person keeping a dog without a license, he fills in a form and sends it to Somerset House. In this, besides the name and occupation of the offender, is stated whether he or she ever committed a revenue fraud before, whether the fraud was contemplated, what he or she said when found out, what the circumstances of the party are, and a great many other passport-like particulars, which are always very interesting, and especially so if the collector is at all of a garrulous disposition. On reaching the Inland Revenue, the envelope is opened by a clerk, and the report given to a small boy, who conveys it, with a hundred or more other reports, to the Dog Department, where

he stamps it with the seal of the office, embodying the date and a small space for the number, and hands it over to the registrar. This functionary enters it in the register in a numbered space (ten dog cases go to a page) containing sufficient room to chronicle the history of the prosecution from the time the offence is noted, until the penalty is paid.

The report is then numbered, and conveyed to a committee clerk, who examines the particulars of the case, and, on behalf of the Board, decides whether the person informed against shall be prosecuted or not. If in the affirmative, he scribbles on the face of it 'Inf,' the abbreviation for the technical expression 'Exhibit information;' if in the negative, he writes 'No pros.,' short for 'No prosecution.' Under this order he inscribes his initials. The messenger who took it to him now stamps it with the committee clerk's seal, and brings it back to the Dog Department, where the order is registered, and the paper sent off afresh on its travels to the draughting clerks.

These officials write to the collector, in-

forming him of the decision of the Board of Inland Revenue, send him forms for summons, etc, undersign the committee clerk's initials with their own, and return the report to the registrar, who enters the date of return in a fresh column, and puts it away with hundreds of others in a box made especially for the purpose.

There is now an interval of several weeks, during which time the document gets considerably dog-eared and dirty in its place of deposit. A second communication then arrives from the collector, containing the 'Hearing Letter,' which comprises a brief report of the trial, the penalty imposed, and sundry other small particulars. The clerk opens it, the small boy stamps it, the registrar enters it and pins it to document No. 1, and the messenger carries it away to the committee clerk. If the expenses in conducting the case are reasonable, the committee clerk writes across the document 'Allow expenses,' and signs it. The messenger then stamps it, conveys it to the registrar, who enters the order, and sends it on to the draughting clerks' department, where the de-

cision is communicated to the collector, and the document returned to the registrar to be noted in his book, and put away in a second box for future reference.

After a while, a third letter arrives containing the collector's 'Reward Report.' This announces when the fine was paid, and the name of the informer entitled to the Government gratuity of five shillings for 'exhibiting' the offender. The clerk opens it, the small boy stamps it, the registrar registers it and pins it to the previous papers, and the messenger bears it away to the registrar of fines. The registrar of fines enters it, and initials it, and sends it by the messenger to the committee clerk. The latter writes across it, 'Give five shillings,' and appends his initials. The messenger then stamps it, and takes it back to the registrar of dogs; the registrar enters the order, the messenger conveys it to the draughting clerks, from whom, after a while, it finally returns, is registered for the last time, and is put away in a press with thousands of other documents, to remain there two or three years, and afterwards to be stowed

away among the archives in the capacious vaults under Somerset House.

As often as not during the course of the prosecution, the unfortunate offender writes up to explain how it came to pass that the duty was not paid. In this case, the machinery of the department is set a-going in exactly the same manner as with the official papers. The clerk opens the letter, the small boy stamps it, the registrar registers it, numbers it, and pins it to the papers dealing with the case; the messenger takes it to the committee clerk, the committee clerk writes across it, 'Must be heard,' 'Cannot stay proceedings,' or 'No pros.' (not this very often, however), and initials it; the messenger stamps it, and takes it back to the registrar; the registrar enters the order, the messenger conveys it to the draughting clerk; the draughting clerk informs the petitioner of the decision, the messenger takes it back to the registrar; the registrar notes its return in the register, and the documents are once more stowed away in the box.

This mode of procedure is carried out strictly with every communication that ar-

rives referring to the case; and the Barnacles, concerned in this merry-go-round routine, would no more dream of deviating one iota from the system established, than the earth would dream of quitting its path round the sun. Let me give it, therefore, as a wrinkle to those who have got into the clutches of the excise collector, and see no means of escape, to write thrice a week on the matter to Somerset House. The twenty-five shillings fine they will some day have to pay will be rendered the sweeter by the recollection that they have had their revenge in causing an infinitude of toil to their tormentors at the Inland Revenue.

It is only for this reason that it is really worth while writing about the matter to the head office, as the hearts of the committee clerks are as cold as Mr. Poland's, and the most melting letters of supplication are only pushed aside with a 'Pshaw! serve him right, he shouldn't try to defraud the revenue.'

The great advantage of the system I have described is that the progress of a prosecution can be seen at any moment by a glance at the register, and it is always possible to tell

where the documents are to be found. The same system is pursued with other prosecutions instituted by the Inland Revenue on behalf of the Crown. A large number of people are informed against by revenue officers and policemen, but there are many who owe their exposure either to the malevolence of their neighbours, or to the impecuniosity of broken-down spies. We had several of the latter in connection with our department, some of them, indeed, in tolerably good circumstances, and who made a living by going about informing against people on the chance of receiving the five shillings reward at the close of the prosecution. The majority of the professional informers, however, were wretched creatures, old and dilapidated, such as may be seen loafing about the neighbourhood of the Strand any day in the week. As regards the amateur tell-tales, they were chiefly persons ashamed of their treachery, and wrote to us on the strangest scraps of paper in the most illiterate of handwriting, signing their communications with some uncommon name or title, such as 'A Friend to the Revenue,' 'An Indignant Neighbour,'

‘Where’s the Police?’ or, as often as not, refrained from signing at all. Letters of this description were kept by themselves, a copy being sent on an official form to Scotland Yard, for transmission to the police station nearest the offender’s residence. Many of these anonymous communications proved on examination to be worthless, the persons either having licenses in their possession or having no dogs at all. Some were carefully got up to hoax the Inland Revenue, and I remember one, giving the names of some thirty offenders in Mile End Road, living at extended intervals, which occupied a policeman half a day in inquiring into, and which, after all, resulted in not a single discovery of fraud.

The Inland Revenue was more successful with sneaks like Mr. Scribbins who informed against his own lodger, or like an undutiful nephew at South Kensington who exposed the negligence of his own aunt in regard to her favourite poodle. The manner in which these letters were written was always a source of amusement to us. In some of them the ‘Honourable Sirs’ of the

Board of Inland Revenue Commissioners were addressed as 'My Lords and Gentlemen,' and in others as 'Mr. Board, Sir.' The letters and reports from Wales were the worst we had to deal with, on account of the similarity of the offenders' names, and the length and unpronounceability of their addresses. A 'John Jones' was always writing to us from some locality or other; of 'William Williams' we had a score upon our books, and 'Llanfihangelynhowyn' is a sample of the style of address that used at times to drive Mr. Gadfly and myself nearly crazy.

The number of dog prosecutions in a place depends largely upon the vigilance or zeal of the collectors. Sheffield was always a noted place in this respect, and from the batches of reports that used to arrive every Monday morning I should imagine that the collector, out of exemplary zeal, was wont to employ himself all day Sunday preparing them. London itself was about the worst town looked after; the number of dog cases being ridiculously small for the size and population of the Metropolis. Now and again it was customary to send round a circular to the

police and revenue officers, enjoining vigilance and zeal, and then there would be a rush of detections for a while, to be followed by another fall off as soon as the fit was over.

The average cost of a dog prosecution is very small, and in the majority of cases the Inland Revenue makes a profit out of the transaction. But now and again a case is remanded to settle a technical point, and the expenses rapidly run from shillings into pounds. With poor people, after the penalty of £5, always mitigated to 25s., is imposed, it is frequently necessary to take out a second summons to recover the money, and cases are common where persons have been brought to ruin by the fine and the costs imposed upon them. Sometimes, out of a desire to plague the collectors, people will keep them waiting for the money until they have made every preparation for their arrest. One jovial fellow, near Brighton, went so far as to allow the officers to apprehend him, and to convey him in a cab fifteen miles to Lewes Prison, at the door of which, after having enjoyed a pleasant ride in the country air, and a half-crown dinner at the country's expense, he

coolly stepped down, put the 25s. into the collector's hands, and with a smile walked away, wishing him 'Good-morning.'

In this case the Inland Revenue deserved no commiseration, as the Board itself is equally sharp in dealing with the public. It is not generally known that a dog license taken out in Ireland does not hold good in England, the tax in the former country being levied for a local, and in the latter for an imperial purpose. Many people forget also that a license expires on the 31st of January, and that one taken out the day before does not hold good for the year. It is also a dangerous practice to act the Samaritan in taking in homeless dogs, with the intention of finding the owner. If the animal remains on the premises two or three days a sharp collector is sure to gain a conviction, and all the prayers in the universe will not afterwards avail in rescinding the penalty. A common pitfall is the forgetfulness of the fact that licenses are not transferable. Hundreds of people are caught in this snare every year. Among the lower orders it is a common belief that the fine will never be enforced if

the delinquent is poor ; and on the part of the rich it is mostly assumed that the high social position of the offender, and a dashing pair of steeds neighing at the door of the Barnacle building, will have weight with the Commissioners. In neither case is it safe to trust to such assumptions, the Committee Clerk being as much steeled against the one as against the other, and enforcing prosecutions against both with relentless severity. Occasionally the Clerk will compromise the case, and keep it from going before the public for the full penalty of £5 ; and *on dit* that more than once a pretty face going to Somerset House has succeeded in getting clear of the trial and the fine altogether. It is not a difficult call to make ; the committee clerks are the most agreeable and gallant of men, and if any of my fair readers get into trouble over their pet lap-dogs, they may thank me for this timely suggestion.

* * * *

The fabric of administration in the office in which I held the temporary dignity of Assistant-Registrar of Unlicensed Dogs was composed of writers, established clerks, com-

mittee clerks, the secretary and his assistants, and the Board. Many of the functionaries were again individualized by titles as pompous-sounding as the one that I myself laid claim to, and most of these extras in the way of nomenclature had something handsome attached to them in the shape of gratification money or 'duty-pay.' I have already said that Mr. Cooper, in his extra capacity of Controller of Stationery, received yearly a neat little cheque for £50, for occasionally giving out a pen or a sheet of paper, and I found to my amazement, in course of time, that there were other officials, recipients of four or five times that amount, who did little else to earn their duty-pay than warm their backs at the office fire, or wink at the ladies passing along Wellington Street to the Strand. These little pickings of the public purse were regarded with such favour by the Barnacles in the Tax Department, that when a shifting of seats took place under a fresh reorganization, the clerks never troubled themselves about the salaries so long as they made a lucrative haul at the Duty-Pay. And thus, when in Parliament a Reforming

Member arose, and with indignation demanded how it was that the clerks at Somerset House received such excessive salaries as compared with those in Thames Street, he was quietly told by the Fiscal Fugleman from the Strand that he was labouring under a most egregious delusion, and was then and there crushed with a volley of figures, proving that Mr. Fluff at the one place did not receive at the utmost more than £50 a year more than Mr. Down at the other. Then the next morning when the Barnacles assembled at Somerset House, each one would wink at the other, and poke each other slyly in the ribs, and a general laugh would go round at the greenness of the Reforming Member in not asking the Fugleman about the 'Duty-Pay.'

As might be expected, none of these plums fell to the writers, who, with their small incomes and large families, often stood more in need of perquisites than the well-fed and unctuous Barnacles. My predecessor in the dog business had been a certain ex-colonel of the Grenadier Guards. Betting and bad luck had brought him down to the level of a tenpenny, and he had been glad to earn even

this small pittance till his friends found him something better to do. No doubt a little duty-pay would have been a godsend to a person in his condition, though I fear he would not have deserved the gratuity half so much as Writer Williams in the Legacy Duty Office, who had lost a fortune of £500 a year in the Albert Assurance Company ; or Writer Jones (Sefton's hack), who had ruined himself in trying to bring to perfection a patent for raising wrecks at sea. I believe that the plan proposed by the deluded man was to employ huge magnets of immense power, which when lowered into the water would grasp the iron sides of a ship as tenaciously as a boy's magnet does a needle, and would bring the wreck triumphantly to the surface. The only drawback to the plan, he often assured me, was the difficulty of obtaining sufficient magnetic power ; but he was sanguine that some day or other this small obstacle would be successfully conquered.

Talking about Writers, reminds me that the system of supplying the Barnacle Service with fresh men deserves more attention than has yet been paid it.

Society is well acquainted with the numerous hopeful young gentlemen whose opulent or ambitious mammas and papas place them under a professional crammer, and propel them by sheer force of learning into the Service; but less is known of the humbler folk, who act awhile the part of tenpenny drudges, content to storm the castle from inside the fortress itself. Most of these latter are the sons of small tradespeople, desirous of obtaining a genteel occupation as clerks, without the indigence and uncertainty attending that walk of life in the City. To them, if they pass the easy test of a writer-ship exam., the weekly one-pound-ten, which at once becomes their salary, is a nice little *ad interim* income. The employment is mostly permanent, or, at least, they are rarely out of employ at long intervals; they acquire the 'style' of the Service, which is of no mean value at a Cannon Row contest; and they are often able to devote half their time between ten and four to cramming their heads with material for the evening classes. Taking everything into consideration, they invariably have quite as much time to devote

to 'cramming' as the well-to-do young men who study for the service at home; and the only difference in their training consists in that the latter receive their assistance from the 'crammer' during the day, and the former in the evening after four o'clock. The writers, however, have this signal advantage over outsiders, inasmuch as while persons unconnected with the service cannot compete for a clerkship after a certain age, the Tenny, on account of the deduction made for the time he has been in Government employ, never grows old, and is therefore always eligible for a fresh 'set-to' at Cannon Row.

Leaving for a moment the rival advantages of writers and outsiders out of consideration, the absurdity of some of these competitive examinations must be apparent to all who do not wear the pedagogue pate of a Civil Service Commissioner. The embryo Rothschild does not qualify himself for his financial career by studying, during banking hours, the course of the Irrawaddy, or the tribal origin of the Cariboos. The late George Moore never trained the young men in his

warehouse for the post of salesmen or travellers by compelling them to learn by heart the names of the Saxon chieftains, or the chronological order of events preceding the Punic Wars. Nor yet does any accountant prepare his clerks for the bankruptcy business by making them con over their ledgers the philological meaning of the expression 'Li-fol-de-rol-lol,' or the Latin translation for 'Soup-ladle.' I believe that nowhere in the City, or out of it, is the extraordinary spectacle witnessed of men trying to adapt themselves for the routine and responsibility of a business by cramming their minds with knowledge wholly distinct from it; and only Barnacle ingenuity, I am sure, could have invented the scheme of promotion by which a writer can only attain a higher position in his department by an effort of memory in retaining for a season mountains of learned rubbish. In any other place but a public office the sight would not be for a moment tolerated of a young man striving to merit promotion by neglecting his work to learn Latin and Greek for futile examinations. The fact is, the Government knows well that

the work performed by the Civil Service is not of a very intellectual character, and it being degrading to the inflated dignity of bureaucracy to institute a test of mere routine ability, in which the dullard at 30s. a week would prove himself as competent as the clerk with £300 a year, the scheme of severe competitive examinations has been instituted, and the impression has got abroad that one must be a very clever fellow indeed to be a Barnacle.

This impression is propped up by the Writer system, which rests entirely upon the false assumption that mechanical routine can be separated from mental responsibility in a public office. The ingenious statesman who started it was evidently an admirer of the principle of the division of labour ; but however beneficial this system may be in a department like the Money Order Office, where the work is purely mechanical, it is totally out of place in other branches of the public service. The question as to the ratio of responsibility to routine in the public offices may be settled by the rough calculation of ten to one hundred ; and, as a matter of fact,

an inspection of the work performed by the majority of Civil Service clerks would show that scarcely any 'seat' is free from a large amount of routine labour, and that it is impossible to separate one from the other. This being the case, there is scarcely an instance in which a writer is not called upon to perform duties almost identical with those of the clerical staff; and the anomaly is created of two men toiling at one task—the one receiving £80 a year and the other £400. The injustice of such a system is recognized by both parties, and as the Treasury obstinately refuses to grant any remedy, an attempt is often made by the clerks to improve their colleagues' position by indulgences in the shape of abundant leave of absence and so forth. Free permission is also often given by the superiors of departments to writers to get up in working-hours their studies for second-class clerkships; and it is easy to see that the license thus accorded has the pernicious effect of introducing a lax system of discipline into the office. And to render the writer scheme more stupid still, the Tenpenny who is successful in getting upon the Estab-

lished list by means of a competitive examination, is scarcely ever appointed to the office in which he has been working since he entered the Service, but is sent away to some other place where promotion may be limited by the smallness of the department. Thus, a writer who has been employed in the luxurious India Office or Treasury, in which there is a large field for the display of ability, is liable, on passing an 'exam.,' to be appointed to some such peddling little hovel as the Seaman's Registry Office, or to that sleepy hollow, the Mint. And the persistency with which these self-made clerks are told off to the inferior appointments in the East of London, while young men of good birth from the outside, who have done nothing to merit favourable notice, are steadily drafted into the West-End offices, is an evidence that nepotism has not yet disappeared so effectually from the Civil Service as the Commissioners at Cannon Row would yearly have us to imagine.

* * * *

As may be gathered from some of my early remarks, Mr. Cooper occupied an important

position in the Dog Department. Among his colleagues he was more familiarly known as the 'Admiral,' and during the early days of my apprenticeship to the Dog-Register, I really believed that this was his proper title, thinking that he had perhaps earned it under Charley Napier in the Baltic, and had afterwards been rewarded by a snug little sinecure in Somerset House. This impression was heightened by his appearance, which was decidedly nautical. His face was scarlet, and of that puffy, coarse consistency which distinguishes most men who have battled with the elements at sea. He had grog-blossoms on his nose. He was habited in a pilot-jacket, and, in wet weather he came down to the office rigged out in a complete suit of oilskin. His lunch consisted of an allowance of grog and a captain's biscuit. His vocabulary was largely made up of nautical expressions ; and, whenever he wanted anything from the Carriage Department, the demand was usually preceded by the cheerful singsong, 'Sefton, ahoy !' followed by 'Shiver my timbers !' if the Barnacle referred to did not speedily present himself at the 'shoot.' Finally, he

employed, on all occasions, a variety of choice expletives, more remarkable for their force than for their fitness for modern usage; and he was particularly pleased at being able now and again to bring out a sturdy nautical oath.

If the melancholy truth must be known, the 'Admiral,' however well he may have personified that exalted title, was no other than a plain civilian. Fifty-four years ago he had entered the British Navy as a midshipman, and had served four years afloat; at the end of which period, for a cause unknown to the office, he had left the naval service, and had shipped on board that good vessel 'Her Majesty's Excise'—a lucrative hulk, well encrusted with Barnacles, moored off Waterloo Bridge. Half a century is a long time for a man to work in an office; but the Admiral's course was nearly run, and a commission was then sitting which would shortly cut him adrift from his moorings. The Admiral clung to his post with all the tenacity of a Barnacle—more so, in fact, as, unlike other creatures of his class, he loved the Service quite as much as his pay, and very often his

voice would falter when he spoke of his approaching departure. Yet his prospects were not lugubrious. The Government had told him he would have £500 per annum when he left the office, or a good round sum in ready cash, if he preferred to commute his pension.

Twenty years previously, the Board, to facilitate promotion in the Tax Department, had wished to superannuate the Admiral; and a trusty go-between had accordingly informed him that the Board would be inclined to deal generously with him if he chose to resign; to which the Admiral returned no other answer than to glare over his spectacles at the emissary, and to vehemently declare that 'he would see the Board damned first.' This very ingenuous reply rather amused the Board than otherwise; and, knowing the difficulty of getting rid of a clerk who clings to his post, they had consented to let him remain. The triumph was quite a feather in the cap of the old gentleman, and he never failed to flourish it on quarter-day, when his ancient colleagues, who had displayed less attachment to their colours, came to the Dog Department to sign the pension papers that

secured to them two-thirds, or five-sixths, of their former salary. It was impossible not to feel an interest in these old gentlemen, less on account of the times of nepotism which they represented, than the excellent health and capital pensions they enjoyed. Many of them had left the service under some scheme or other of reorganization, whereby the Service was to be vastly improved, and a margin of retrenchment secured for the ratepayer. It would appear to have been always the case at Somerset House, and at other West-End offices also, for the scheme of promotion to be so stupid and clumsy as to require, every ten years, a thorough reorganization, necessitating a number of middle-aged clerks leaving on remarkably advantageous terms, and raising the salaries of the remainder nearly double. As to how this hocus-pocus arrangement is carried out, I had better refer the reader himself to the pages of abundant blue-books. My *forte* is not financial, and I cannot explain how the trick is done; but the one result of every reorganization is that everybody in the office benefits to the extent of some fifty per cent., whilst retrenchment is represented by

rows of figures rarely culminating in less than £10,000 or £20,000. The mystery of the arrangement is that, while retrenchment is constantly taking place in the various departments of the State, the Civil Service Estimates, in the aggregate, yearly display an increase.*

Some of the quarterly pensioners who waited upon us were well-to-do farmers; others had settled down to stagnation in the suburbs, or at the seaside; while a few of the brisker ones had gone into business, and were partners of flourishing firms. There were none of them but what had plenty of working power in them; and among their number was a shining instance of a bad bargain—not the only one in the Service, I fear—in the person of a middle-aged stockbroker, who, twenty years earlier, had been superannuated

* In 1857-58 the sum required for the Civil Service was £14,340,000; in 1877-78 the estimates were £23,400,000, being an increase of nine millions during a period of incessant reorganization and retrenchment! Mr. Dillwyn's motion, on February 18th, 1879, that a Select Committee should be appointed to consider and report upon the Civil Service Estimates, 'clause by clause, item by item,' was voted for by Mr. Walter, the proprietor of the *Times*.

on a good allowance because he was going to die, but who suddenly afterwards plucked up spirits and health, and was now a veritable Samson in the matter of strength and energy.

In common with these, and many other clerks of the old school, the Admiral had a sturdy contempt for the British public. For that very necessary but extremely nasty ingredient in the universe, he entertained a profound and undisguised disgust. The Dog Department was the room into which people were usually ushered when they came to explain why their dog-licenses had not been paid, or the reason that the tax on their carriages, their servants, or their armorial bearings had been overlooked. The Admiral's duty was to examine their petitions—verbal explanations were never received—and either to undertake to place them before the Board, or, in special instances, to send the petitioners in to the Secretary. Occasionally, among the callers, would appear journalists and authors—'literary coves,' Stanley, the messenger, termed them—men who wanted to know this, and that, and the other about taxation, and

who would put regular 'floorers' to the Admiral on the subject of fiscal finance.

These were a special abomination to the old Admiral, and, during the interview, were snappily answered, and, after their departure, heartily damned in every limb of their body. Stanley always referred to the visitors under the generic term of the 'British public'—any announcement of the arrival of which evoked from the old gentleman a large amount of nautical displeasure. One trifling incident, which might serve as a note to future editions of 'Little Dorrit,' still dwells upon my memory, and may be narrated here.

It was one o'clock, and the head of the Dog Department was about to regale himself with grog.

'The British public!' exclaimed Stanley, entering.

'Damn the British public! Who is it?' demanded the Admiral, angrily.

'A lawyer-looking fellow; wants to see the Secretary.'

'Confound his impudence! Show him in. Damn him for disturbing my lunch!'

The gentleman entered. He was somewhat

portly, and had a very imperious expression on his face—an expression which the Admiral thought it his duty to humble. Accordingly he took up the *Times*, and proceeded to read it with as much coolness as though the lawyer-looking fellow were fifty miles away. When he thought the visitor sufficiently punished for wearing such a look in his presence, he demanded, with asperity, what he wanted?

‘I want to see the Secretary,’ said the visitor.

‘Have you any papers?’

‘No.’

‘What is your business, then?’

‘I want to see the Secretary.’

‘But you have no papers. Have you sent any papers to the Board by post?’

‘No.’

‘Then what do you want?’

‘My good man,’ exclaimed the gentleman, testily, ‘I have told you that half a dozen times already. I—want—to—see—the—Secretary. It is not a question of papers, but of a personal interview. Here,’ turning round to the messenger, ‘as this good man

at the desk does not seem to know how to give you the proper order, will you convey this card to the Secretary, and say that Mr. —, the Member for Mustard, wishes to see him ?

And before the Barnacle could recover from his astonishment sufficiently to apologise, the M.P. had followed Stanley out of the room, and was gone.

‘What the devil did he want, I wonder ?’ the Admiral demanded of us, when the sound of the footsteps had died away ‘Confound him, why couldn’t he say he was an M.P. at the outset ?’

During the rest of the day the Admiral was in a very low and despondent condition ; but on the morrow he suddenly recovered his spirits, and came bounding into the room with some documents, and uttering remarks about the Member for Mustard which, to put the case mildly, were very unkind indeed. The cause of his hilarity was soon explained. The M.P. had omitted to take out a carriage-license, and had been fined £20. This it had been his errand the day before to endeavour to have reduced ; but the Board, with praiseworthy impartiality—extolled to the skies

by the Admiral—had refused to accede to the application.

Barring his blasphemous language, the Admiral was a capital clerk to work with. While reading his official papers of a morning, he would keep up a running fire of remarks, curses, and anecdotes, which, although a little tiresome when we were busy, were, on the whole, a very agreeable relief to our labours.

‘Here’s a Collector writes up,’ he would commence, ‘to report his horse “convalescent,” and describes Mrs. Jones’s circumstances good, but “reputation bad.” Damn him, we didn’t want her reputation. . . . Look here, Gadfly, here’s a letter, with full name and address, to “The Honourable Board of Fatheads,” inquiring whether he will have to take out a dog-license for keeping a set of dog-irons on the premises? An ironical blackguard that—we’ll send it in to the Board; it’ll amuse them. . . . I have another here, in which a man cannot pay his fine because he is laid up “sore ill in health with a large family;” and the Collector writes beneath, “An impudent lie; he is a bachelor,

and I saw him in a public-house, drunk, yesterday." That's your School Board education for you. . . . Did you know Booker, Gadfly? He was before your time, I think. He was superannuated in '73, and commuted. He rose from nothing to £900 a year, and had to examine the Collectors' reports for the Board. One day, Pudge, the Collector at Greenwich, was called into his office, and found Booker, broad-shouldered, big-waist-coated and pompous, brandishing the poker before the fire. "What do you mean, sir," he said to Pudge, "by addressing the Board in your vulgar street vocabulary? In your expenses this morning, sir, I see the words 'cab' and 'bus;' both blackguard expressions, and unfit to go before the Board. Cab, sir, I would have you know, is from the French—*cab-ri-o-let*, a private conveyance; bus, sir, is the slang for the Latin noun *omnibus*, a general conveyance, and is compounded of the roots *omni*, 'all,' and *bus*, the 'people'"—*Twiggez-vous, Messieurs?*'

After a short pause, the Admiral would break out afresh: 'The collector at Portlesea wants to know whether he can have a new

carpet for his office? No, damn him, he can't; he only had fresh fire-irons the other day. . . . Hallo! we've nailed that Glasgow man, Macarthy. Don't you remember him? He wrote up imploring to be let off a dog-fine, and the silly fool wrote the petition on paper with armorial bearings, which he wasn't licensed for. Well, he's convicted of both now, and serve him right too, for being such a simpleton. He's no true Sandy, I'll be bound. . . . I say, Gadfly, you have heard that story about the Bishop. No? Well, drop that dog case while I tell you. In North Britain, you must know, bishops' visits are few and far between, and people therefore always make a fuss with the good man while he's with them. Some years ago, a bishop gave notice that he was about to visit a village, the name of which I have forgotten, but which, anyhow, was deucedly poor. How to entertain His Righteousness nobody knew; but the parish-clerk was a clever devil, and he told them he would make up for all deficiencies by composing a hymn especially for the occasion. The day arrived. The Bishop went steadily through the service till he

brought his gab to its bearings alongside the anthem ; and then the parish-clerk, rising in his pew, cleared his throat, and said : “ Let us now sing, to the honour and glory of God, a hymn of my own composing :

“ Ye little hills, why do ye skip and hop?
Is it because ye see the great Bish-op?
Ye little hills, why do ye hop and skip?
Is it because ye see the great Bish-ip ?”

In this manner the worthy old gentleman would rattle on the whole of the morning, keeping the registrar of dogs and his assistant incessantly on the giggle. He had a dry, racy humour, peculiarly in keeping with his character as ‘ Admiral ;’ and nothing delighted the draughting clerks more than to troop in during the latter end of the afternoon, and set the old Barnacle’s tongue on the wag.

It was, therefore, regarded as quite a departmental calamity when the order came out that the old Admiral was to go. Everybody said that he could not support being bereaved of the office. Bets were freely laid by sporting juniors as to the number of quarters’ pensions he would draw, and no one would go higher than three. The Admiral himself did

not say much, but we could see that he felt keenly his impending fate. He came earlier, and stayed later. He declared he should die of *ennui* as soon as he left, and his desire to enjoy as much as he could of the office in the short time that was left was such, that he actually came on a holiday, and worked at his desk all day.

At last the eventful afternoon arrived. The Admiral received his papers signed by the Board, allowing him £500 per annum the rest of his days, and the Barnacles assembled in the Dog-Room to bid the old fellow good-bye, and to drink the health of his successor Pidgway, who had already brought from the Legacy Duty Department his easy-chair, pen-box, and writing-case. Most of the committee clerks were present, and all the juniors. The speech on behalf of Pidgway was delivered by Pertle, the clever committee clerk, a tall and handsome man, of whom Stanley whispered in my ear, as he uncorked the champagne :

‘Once Lord ——’s footman ; now a committee clerk, with £800 a year. Such is the luck of life, sir, if you only have friends.’

Mr. Pidgway having replied, a bumper was prepared for the Admiral, who had previously taken leave of his colleagues, and was now making quietly for the door, with a hand-bag containing his grog-glass, a favourite pen, an old penwiper, and his office coat. As the enthusiasm died away, a faltering voice was heard thanking us, and the old fellow, true to his colours to the last, opened the door, and, turning round, said firmly, in the old, old style we were soon to hear no more :

‘ Good-bye, my hearties ! To one and all, a *damned* good-bye !’

A few months later the melancholy intelligence was brought to the office one morning that the Admiral was dead.

* * * * *

With the departure of the Admiral may be said to have ended my happy quarter of an hour at Somerset House, for the same stroke of reform that swept away the principal, also carried off my colleague, Gadfly, to the Draughting Clerks’ department. Him I had found to be an excellent yoke-fellow. Perhaps he mistook bustle for business, and displayed his energy a little too effusively,

but he really was a hard-working registrar, and about the only Barnacle I encountered in my course, who would take off his coat and work—and *work*—in his shirt-sleeves when the occasion required it. For some weeks I suffered from his impulsive way of goading me at full speed through the register, but at length I got to know the system, and henceforth we worked together as easily and as harmoniously as a knife and fork.

The committee clerks, unless burdened with arrears, were unable to go on with the Dog cases until the reports had passed through our hands, and thus we had to work with might and main to let them have them as early as possible in the morning. We mostly managed to finish their supply by twelve, and the rest of the papers were cleared off by one or two o'clock in the afternoon. After this there was nothing to do, except a little indexing, which I could do just as well in the first part of the morning, before the Dog reports arrived.

I early represented to Gadfly that there was no use my sitting idle in the office when there was nothing to do, and he very good-

naturedly prevailed upon the Admiral to let me go home as soon as the work was finished. Thus, if I sunk my luncheon-hour, I got away at half-past two or three; and, if the work required my attendance later, I took an hour for lunch, from twelve to one, and left the office at half-past three. On Saturdays I constantly left at twelve. This shortening of the official six hours, and the non-necessity of arriving before half-past ten, added to the very interesting nature of the work, and the jocose disposition of the old Admiral, made my seat very agreeable, and I grew exceedingly attached to it.

It was on this account that I witnessed with a pang the departure of my two colleagues and the arrival of Gadfly's successor, a young fellow from the Carriage Department, with a salary of £100 a year, which was raised to £220 on his taking over the Dogs. He came to his new appointment with the full and fallacious notion that he knew all about the duties; and this self-conceit, added to a naturally imbecile disposition and a total absence of the very necessary quality of method and organization, made

matters extremely unpleasant for me. A couple of days in his company was sufficient to show me that it was no use trying to instruct such a wrong-headed Barnacle, who had got into the Service by sheer force of 'cram,' and had suffered from softening of the brain ever since. I therefore let him sail along by himself, in his own muddy channel, where he constantly ran aground among the shoals, and drew upon his head the maledictions of angry committee clerks. The worst feature in the case, so far as myself was concerned, was that the work was now never finished before four, and I had not a second of leisure to myself. The only way out of the difficulty was to take an hour for lunch, and to soothe my ruffled feelings by travelling about the Strand and Fleet Street in company with Mr. Boswell, or by making small purchases of fresh fruit in Covent Garden, and eating them in solitude and quietness in the genial warmth of the sun on the Thames Embankment. Podlets, I should add, was a thin-limbed, thin-featured, muddy-complexioned young man of twenty-two, and was just aspiring to issue from the obscurity of a junior's lodgings

in Euston Road to the dignity of apartments near Berkeley Square, and fellowship with draughting clerks at St. James's.

It was in the height of my season of discontent that one day an application was made, by the Armorial Bearings' Registry Office, for the loan of an extra clerk, and Pidgway, the Admiral's successor, and a capital man of business, very considerably selected Podlets for the post. On being informed of this selection, Podlets, who did not wish to leave the Dogs, said, with a flushed face and tremulous voice, that he did not think that I could carry on the entire work of the register by myself, as I was 'not sufficiently acquainted with the routine of the department.'

I almost bounded out of my boots with indignation at his audacity. I have since frequently admired his speech as an exquisite piece of puppyism.

'What does Mr. Marvin say?' said Pidgway, with a twinkle of the eye.

'It is altogether consistent with the conceit of Mr. Podlets that he should know more about the Dogs than his instructor. I can only say I have no need of Mr. Podlet's ser-

vices. I can conduct the register very well without him.'

Pidgway smiled, but Podlets was furious. He dropped the Dogs at once, and vanished. In the afternoon he came into the room and began lording over the register, asking, with the authoritative tone of a Barnacle addressing his hack the writer, whether I was doing my work in a proper manner. I put down my pen, and told him that if he interfered, I should place the case before the Board and resign. Pidgway entering the room at the time, I continued that I would not allow my work to be meddled with. Upon which Podlets said he would throw the whole of the duties upon my shoulders, and went off in a huff, fancying that, single-handed, I should soon be brought to beg for his assistance. But therein he was mistaken. Having the Dogs entirely in my own hands, I was able to introduce my own labour-saving system of working, and, after a few days' time, I was again in a position to leave the office at three or half-past. *De facto*, I was now the sole Registrar of Unlicensed Dogs, and, in consequence, something more in position, if not in

pay, than a mere copyist. Now and again the envious thought would start upon me, that, as I did alone for £78 a year what a clerk and a writer had previously done for £300, I ought to share in the saving effected ; but a man with a destiny can afford to discard such frivolous suggestions, and I drove them away.

Early in August the Lyon Playfair Scheme of Reorganization began to act upon the department, and the ukase went forth that all the writers were to be discharged and a fresh set of individuals introduced called. 'Lower Division Clerks.' These were to start with £80 a year, to be enlarged by annual increments of £15 to £200 ; permission being accorded to heads of departments to give to a few extra duty-pay of £100 a year under certain special circumstances. By this exemplary scheme of reform, writers who had been employed by the State for years, and knew their work well, were to be dismissed, and their places filled by raw lads from school. Common-sense might have suggested that it would have been better to have used up the existing writer staff before imposing a fresh set of copy-

ing clerks upon the Service, or, at least, the cream of the writers should have been absorbed and the residuum dismissed. But simplicity has no charms for theory-mongers, and the Lyon Playfair Commission called into existence an absurdity as egregious as the Writer system itself.

I applied at Cannon Row for permission to sit for the examination necessary to enable me to become a Lower Division Clerk, but my application was refused, on the grounds that I had been over twenty when I entered the Service. It occurred to me then to write to the head of our department, the Assistant Secretary.

The Assistant Secretary was a very terrible personage. He was the *bête noire* of the Dogs, the Carriages, the Armorial-Bearings, and, in a word, of all the registries gathered under his secretarial shadow. It was asserted that even committee clerks trembled in his presence. At any rate the draughting clerks did, and many a time it had amused me to watch them shivering in the passage, fearful to enter the sanctum of their dreaded overseer to have their drafts examined. Gadfly

and the rest painted him in the blackest colours. He never spoke an encouraging word, they said. He had a freezing, crushing manner. He snubbed right and left without regard for rank. He scratched out entire sentences in the juniors' drafts. He jeered at slips of grammar. He passed his pen remorselessly through whole pages of composition if it did not please him. He reviewed the epistolary work of the Barnacles as ruthlessly as he reviewed the literary work of non-Barnacles in the columns of the *Academy*. Never was seen such a terrible secretary. The dread he inspired had passed into a proverb, and displayed itself in the manner in which he was usually referred to by the Barnacles: 'That damned Nossetti!' He was so generally mentioned by this title that it was not until I had occasion to write to him that I knew his Christian name to be William Michael. Yet, in spite of the unpopularity of Dante Nossetti's brother, the Barnacles fully admitted his great talents, and in the circle that gathered round the Admiral, and swore at everything, from their own 'body and soul'—a favourite curse—to the limbs and eyes

of the Art-Reviewer, the many reforms the Assistant Secretary had wrought in the department, and the energy he had displayed in rising from a junior's seat to his present position, were the theme of one and all. The clerks disliked him because he was not a Barnacle of the true and approved Barnacle breed. His ways were not their ways, and their ways were not his.

I rather enjoyed the sensation of facing such a terrible functionary, and it was with confidence and satisfaction that I responded to the summons of Stanley the messenger, the morning after my letter had reached Nossetti's office.

It chanced to be signing-on time, and a dozen Barnacles were gathered round the time-sheet in the Dog Department. The summons provoked surprise.

'I hope there is nothing up!' said Pidgway.

'As for me,' exclaimed Podlets, 'I would sooner stand a bottle of champagne than face the Assistant Secretary early in the morning!'

'He doesn't send for you for nothing,

depend upon it,' added Sefton, with a serious look.

I followed Stanley along the corridor to a medium-sized room, somewhat dark and stuffy. The walls were shadowed by sombre prints. A dreary bureau deepened the gloom. Heavy curtains clouded the window. For a moment I felt a shock that a leader of the Pre-Raphaelite School should work amidst such dark inartistic surroundings. The apartment was not one-twentieth so bright and fresh and grateful to the senses as Blister's—Blister who knew as much about art, as the Admiral once said, 'as a horse does of sanctification'—and yet who, with all his artistic blindness, had rendered his office, by means of oil-paintings, statuettes, Oriental gimcracks and flowers, a most charming abode for a Barnacle. I called to my mind, however, a Moscow proverb that 'The pope* is mostly the worst sinner in the parish,' and the shock passed off.

Sitting hard at work at a table in the middle of the room was a man with a fine

* Priest.

forehead, dark hair and Italian features. He was remarkably calm and self-possessed, and did not waste a word during our interview. When Stanley ushered me into the room, he simply said :

‘Please sit down there,’ pointing to a chair opposite his own, and then went on with his writing.

After some minutes he took my letter from a mass of correspondence in a wicker tray and said :

‘You wrote this ?’

I answered ‘Yes.’

‘You have been engaged some time writing a book on the British Empire,* and do not wish your mind to be unsettled by a removal to another office.’

‘Quite so. I have been engaged on the work all the summer. If I am discharged and sent to Cannon Row the operations of the Playfair scheme may necessitate my seeking subsistence in the City. I do not wish to do that. I wish to remain at Somerset House. In commercial employ I should not have that

* ‘The Empire of the English’ will be published in 1880.

leisure for literature which the Government Service affords me.'

'You mention Froude's name—do you know him?'

'No; I regret I do not. Before writing to you I addressed a letter to him, asking him if he could use his influence to get me removed from my writership here to a writership at the Colonial Office, where I might be able to obtain data for my work. He, however, could not assist me.'

Mr. Froude, I may incidentally remark, very kindly answered my letter by return of post, and added to his regrets a line or two of advice, which was lost in scribble. What the counsel was remained an enigma to me until my papers, carried off in a baker's sack to the Treasury last June, came back again bruised, and torn, and crumpled. I happened then to show the riddle to a friend, and he solved it as follows:

'There is, I fear, but one sure way of obtaining encouragement and help from others. That of showing them that you do not need it.'

Pursuing his interrogation, the Assistant

Secretary asked me several questions about my life in Russia, and in terminating the interview said that, as a subordinate, he could not revoke the decision of the Board in regard to the contemplated discharge of Writers, but if I would take his advice, and address a petition to the Commissioners, he would do his best to further my wishes.

Outside the door I ran against Stanley.

‘Nothing bad, I hope,’ he said, sidling up to me.

‘Oh no ! I have had a most agreeable in interview with the Assistant Secretary.’

‘I thought so,’ he said ; ‘he asked for you in such a kind-like manner.’

When I entered the ‘Dogs’ Pidgway looked at me askance, and, after waiting a few minutes for me to speak, remarked :

‘Nothing bad I hope, Marvin ?’

‘Oh no !’ I replied, and I told him about the interview, leaving out all reference to literature.

The same day I sent in a petition to the Board. The clerk received it, the small boy stamped it, Sefton registered it and numbered it, and sent it to Nossetti ; Nossetti initialled

it and sent it back to Sefton to have my character appended; Sefton registered the order and sent it to Pidgway; Pidgway wrote, 'Has discharged his duties in a very satisfactory manner,' and sent it back to Sefton; Sefton noted the return and sent it on to Nossetti; Nossetti, I presume, placed it before the Board; the Board gave its decision, and the document returned to Sefton with the following decree written by Nossetti on the back, and stamped with the secretarial seal:

'On being relieved in the Secretary's office, Excise branch, should be employed in any other office at Somerset House where a temporary writer may be required. Show this paper in the several offices.'

The document, like a war-token of old, was carried by Stanley through the different offices, and initialled by the heads of each. It afterwards returned to Sefton, was registered for the last time, and was then stowed away among the archives in the vaults, where it now rots.

I was very pleased at the time with the Board order, but I am afraid I have grown

sceptical since. I now believe that the whole thing was a farce from beginning to end, and that Pidgway was correct when he counselled me not to write the petition, 'as it was only flogging a dead horse to do so.'

My pride, during this period, was further increased by a circumstance that had an ultimate influence on the events of last June. The Bulgarian atrocities had taken place during the summer, and in Russia the indignation had been intense. Of this I had been kept well informed by my numerous correspondents, and observing that the feeling remained unnoticed in the English Press, I wrote a series of letters to various metropolitan and provincial newspapers, all of which, I believe, were rejected. Still I was not discouraged. Each letter was better than the last, and I was resolved to keep on writing until I wrote myself into a newspaper: the final success being only a question of patience and time.

At length, after many failures, I determined to try the *Globe*, to which paper I had not written before, because I had not wished to be vexed by a rebuff in that quarter. An

excellent news-letter, full of fresh facts, which I had just received from Central Russia, furnished me with a good groundwork for an 'inside' article, and I sent it in. It was accepted, and I was encouraged in a very kind letter to furnish other contributions. In this manner, on the 24th August, 1876, recommenced my connection with the Press, to endure, I hope, as long as I live.

It was not until a month after this important event that the Lower Division lads began to arrive, and the Writers to take their departure. My successor was the last to come from Cannon Row, and the week that witnessed his advent saw also the removal of the 'Dogs' to a fresh location—a dreary room overlooking a sooty well-hole in the rear of Wellington Street post-office. Pidgway and another colleague obtained permission to share the Dog-Room between them, without the awkward incubus of a third party, and having cleared out the canine-gear, they had the room repapered, re-carpeted, redesked, and rearranged to such a degree that the old Admiral shed tears on viewing the changes effected.

My successor was a lad of nineteen, fresh from a board-school, and wholly a novice at clerical work. His salary, as a matter of retrenchment and economy, was fixed at £80, or £2 a year more than mine, with the prospect of rising to £200. Had he started work in a Watling Street office, he would have received nothing the first year, £20 the second, and £40 the third. Instead of which he started with £80, and thought himself ill-used because the Barnacles worked six hours a day, while the Lower Division Clerks were bound to stay seven.

This arrangement was a novelty introduced by the Playfair Commission, and almost as idiotic as the Lower Division scheme itself. Ignoring the proverb, that when the 'Cat's away, the mice will play,' the Commission had decreed that the new clerks should stay and work an hour after their superiors were gone. The arrangement was unsatisfactory to both parties, and I observe that it forms a prominent feature in the present clamour of the Lower Division class, to be placed on a level with the Barnacles.

It took me a fortnight to familiarize my successor with his duties, and afterwards, my papers having been despatched to Cannon Row, I stepped down from my position of Registrar of Unlicensed Dogs, having, during my brief tenure of office, chronicled 6,000 prosecutions.

THIRD WORDS.

It was with a very faint hope of obtaining a fresh job that I went to Cannon Row on the Monday. The waiting-room I found crowded with writers. To each and to all the same announcement was made by the registrar: 'We have no work for you to-day.'

Yet another day, and another—a week—a fortnight—still the same announcement in the same pitiless tone of voice, and every morning saw the crowd in the antechamber growing larger. Bitter cries were raised against Lyon Playfair for plucking the bread out of the mouths of men who had faithfully served the State for years. The registrar's place became no sinecure.

‘It was infamous,’ the Writers said, ‘to cast men out of employ at the dullest season of the year. Had their discharge been the result of a reduction, they could have borne it with patience ; but to turn men adrift, and to put in their place ignorant boys from school who had done nothing to earn the favour of the State, was unjust—criminally, cruelly unjust ! A set of Bedlamites would have drawn up a better scheme of reorganization than that !’

Among the least noisy of the needy crew was an elderly white-headed man with whom I, after a while, became acquainted. His name was Bairdney, and he had been a Writer all his life. From his lips I gleaned the history of the class to which he and I belonged.

Years previous, when ‘Bleak House’ was still unwritten, he had been a law stationer’s writer, and had been lent, as was the custom in those days, to the Government for eighteen-pence an hour, of which sum his master, Mr. Griffin of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, appropriated one-third. Later on, the wage was reduced to a shilling an hour, and his share curtailed to

ninepence. This reduction caused great dissatisfaction, which was further heightened by the circumstance that in some departments the Barnacles took on Writers of their own, and in course of time absorbed them among the regular staff, while the law-stationers' hacks, were never thus favoured, and were discharged as soon as the work grew slack.

In 1866, Mr. Childers started at the Admiralty a set of departmental writers at 6s. 6d. a day, with an annual increment of 6d. a day till the maximum of 9s. 6d. was reached. Mr. Bairdney had the good-luck to be appointed to this class.

Mr. Childers' scheme was imitated at the Custom-House, but the Commissioners there gave only 5s. 6d. a day, with an annual increment of 3d. a day. It was stipulated at the outset that none of these writers should do other than routine work. Yet the scheme had not been in operation many months before it was found out that the severance of responsibility from routine could not be effected in a public department. Henceforth the Writers did the same work

as the Barnacles receiving £300 or £400 per annum.

In 1870, Mr. Gladstone's Government decided that a uniform system of writers should be established throughout the Service, with the uniform wage of tenpence an hour. At a stroke of the Queen's pen the six-and-sixpenny and the five-and-sixpenny salaries were swept away with retirement allowances, sick leave, holiday pay, and compensation grants; and Mr. Bairdneý, with a number of other men, found themselves reduced to the stagnant level of tenpennies.

This monstrous piece of injustice, for which Mr. Gladstone must be held responsible, deserves to be examined in the strongest possible light. Let me endeavour to do it.

On the one hand were a number of established clerks with certain high salaries and traditional privileges. Their pay was rarely under £200, and occasionally above £2000. On the other hand were a number of established writers (Mr. Childers gave them a *legal* status) with certain low salaries and newly-granted privileges. Their pay was mostly under £95, and in no case above £150.

Both classes worked side by side, and did identical work.

Retrenchment was considered necessary. Now, where in the name of common sense and common justice should that retrenchment have commenced? Among the rich clerks or the needy writers? I leave it to England to decide.

On the 4th of June, 1870, the Queen signed an Order in Council which left the clerks with their high salaries and their privileges untouched, and reduced the pay of the writers from £100 to £78 per annum. To Mr. Gladstone's benevolent attention I recommend this bureaucratic atrocity.

Mr. Bairdneý and his friends banded themselves together, and an agitation was set on foot. Mr. Otway, M.P., took up the Writers' cause, and a parliamentary committee was appointed, which, after long deliberation, placed on record that 'a great injustice' had been done to the unhappy men, and suggested that their pay and privileges should be restored to them. The presentation of the report was followed by a revision of the Writers' regulations. This revision took no

notice of the recommendation about the pay, but put the Writers off with the miserable privilege of one day's holiday every month, and three-quarter pay sick-leave for fourteen days *after* the Writer had served the State a year.

Another agitation thereupon took place. The Liberal administration went out, and a Conservative ministry came in, with the grievance still unaltered. In April, 1874, a Royal Commission, commonly known as the Playfair Commission, began its sittings, and sat in conference till February, 1876. By their recommendation the Civil Service was ordered to be divided into two classes; the Upper Division, or Responsible class, and the Lower Division, or Routine class. The Writers were to be absorbed into the Lower Division by competitive examination, or else discharged.

In the meanwhile Mr. Bairdneý, whose salary at the Admiralty had been reduced from £100 to £78, had, by a reduction in the Writers' staff of the department, been discharged and sent to Cannon Row, whence he had been despatched to Somerset House.

When the Playfair Scheme was introduced he had received sudden orders to present himself at Cannon Row, to be examined in geography, history, book-keeping, decimal fractions, and half-a-dozen other subjects wholly unconnected with his work. In this, as might have been expected, he had been signally plucked, and a lad of eighteen, fresh from college, had been appointed to his place. The cruelty of this examination is apparent. His merits as a clerk, for a clerk's duties, were contemptuously set aside, and he was examined in subjects in which a boy fresh from school and fresh from dealing with them must inevitably surpass him. I can conceive nothing more astoundingly stupid and cruelly unjust than the examination test which the Playfair Commission imposed upon the Writers. It was a fit outcome of scholastic pedantry and impotent originality.

In this manner Mr. Bairdney was thrown upon the world, and brought to penury, while men like Old Chuff were allowed to wag their tongues.

* * * * *

Finding the doors of the Public Offices closed against me, I sought work afresh in the City. I had no love for mercantile pursuits, but I could not subsist alone by my pen. My applications were unsuccessful. Clerical labour was as much a drug in the City as it was at Cannon Row. There seemed no signs of an opening at either place till the spring came round.

It was when the prospect was darker than it had ever been before in my life, and when I had nothing but my unswerving belief in Destiny to sustain me, that I was sent for by the *Globe*. Until then I had not been near the office, my occasional contributions having been despatched through the post. Kindly words of encouragement were given me by the Editor, and I was asked to write some 'inside' articles on Russia for its columns. The feeling of gratitude I experienced at this timely assistance and support is as fresh on me now as ever. I can never forget it.

A month had nearly passed away, and I had begun to leave off attending Cannon Row, when I received a summons requesting my attendance on the morrow. On present-

ing myself at the Registry Room a letter was placed in my hands addressed to—

‘Mr. Ray,

‘The Secretary’s Office,

‘Post-Office.’

‘It is only for two or three days,’ observed the Registrar.

My face flushed with anger. I could have torn up the trumpery appointment, and cast it into the waste-paper basket. But one must not quarrel with one’s bread-and-cheese.

‘Possibly,’ I said to myself, ‘the appointment has been ordained by Destiny. It may be a grain of mustard seed to ripen into fortune.’ I therefore thanked him and walked away.

THE GENERAL POST-OFFICE.

MEN OF LETTERS.

It was twelve o'clock when I reached St. Martin's-le-Grand and entered the newer of the two Post-Office buildings. At the top of the broad stone staircase leading to the first-floor, I found a handsome and spacious messenger's lobby, with a dozen or more uniformed and plain-clothes messengers stamping despatches, sealing letters, opening parcels, and so forth. One of the number took my letter and conveyed it to Mr. Ray, an official sitting in a plainly-furnished apartment near the waiting-room.

'You are Mr. Marvin?' he said.

'The same,' I replied.

‘We shall only require you a few days, a writer in the Foreign Branch being ill.’

He then took me into a large and handsome room containing four or five writing-tables. To a large, broad-shouldered man, with reddish hair and whiskers, and a cross-tempered domineering face, I was presented as the new writer.

‘Do you know your work?’ said the voice behind the domineering face.

‘I do,’ I answered decisively.

‘Then take your seat at that table there,’ pointing to one between the windows, ‘and copy this.’

I hung my hat and coat upon a nail above the table, and sat down to copy the document, which was a mail-list for the printer. When I had finished it he gave me a despatch to write, and then half-a-dozen. They were addressed to the Postmasters-General of Russia, France, Germany, and other countries. Necessarily the work required a little explanation as to the official mode of addressing those exalted personages, and before long I had to trouble the head of the Foreign Branch with a question or two.

‘I thought you knew your work,’ said the Voice, savagely.

‘So I do ; but details of this nature vary in each department.’

The Voice retorted savagely, ‘What is it then, worrying me like this?’ I told him. He curtly explained, and I sat down afresh to the table.

After a while I had to ask for further enlightenment. Another savage dialogue. I thereupon sat down indignantly at the desk and finished the batch off without further inquiry. When they were examined, half of them were wrong in some technical point or other.

‘What is the use of having help from Cannon Row, if despatches are written like this?’ demanded the Voice, angrily. ‘I thought you knew your work.’

‘So I do. But if you mean do I know the petty routine of the Post-Office, then I answer I don’t know it. I know nothing whatever about it. I am a perfect ignoramus, and must be taught.’

‘It’s no use wasting time talking,’ interrupted the Voice. ‘You must teach yourself.

Here, write this despatch afresh at once, and do the rest to-morrow.'

I finished the despatch at five, just as he had concluded a couple he had taken in hand. Glad I was to get into the street again to cool my indignation.

It was Thursday when I started my pen at the Foreign Branch. Friday and Saturday were spent in an equally intolerable manner. Besides the Voice there were two other clerks, one, I believe, a foreign correspondence clerk, who, in common with their chief (I must give the devil his due), worked hard the whole of the seven hours of their official day. I noticed that there was abundance to do in corresponding with the postmasters-general abroad. The work, also, was interesting; but no opportunity was afforded me of learning its character. The whole time I was in the office was one incessant drive, with the Voice at my back acting as goad-master. On Monday, I went to the office determined to have a jolly good row with him, and throw up my magnum-bonum altogether. Such an utterly unfeeling, brutal fellow it had not been my lot to encounter

for many a day—not even in Russia, where brutality abounds.

But deliverance was at hand. On my arrival I found my chair occupied by the regular Writer. The Voice told me I should be kept on that day, as my papers would not be ready before noon. He then gave me a difficult document in French to translate at an adjoining desk.

Later on in the morning I was sent for by Mr. Ray, and was informed that there was a fresh job for me at Sixty-eight. The room bearing this number was devoted to Life Insurance and Annuities, and was under the supervision of Mr. Bidbad, who tenanted a chamber at the end of the corridor. Sixty-eight contained a single occupant and a spare table. I was introduced to the one, and told to take my seat at the other.

Let me describe the apartment more fully. It was situated under the portico of the new building and almost faced the gilded clock under the portico of the old. It consequently commanded a lively view of the street. Thick walls, tinted a cool green, separated it from the waiting-room on the one side and the

Home Branch on the other, and so muffled the sound that we—that is to say, the Registrar and the Writer—were as much isolated from the busy life of the office as if we had been living at Bokhara or Timbuctoo. The registrar's table overlooked the street ; mine abutted upon his, and faced the fireplace. At my back were two bureaus, narrowing the compartment and making it the more cosy. It was very comfortably furnished, and about as nice a little crib for two congenial spirits as one would find anywhere in the Public Service.

The work consisted in answering queries about life policies and annuities, in despatching forms to parties desirous of patronizing the one or the other ; in writing for references ; and finally, after a deal of correspondence, in preparing the necessary deeds for the same. We had visitors daily in the waiting-room to inquire into these matters, and the prompt and courteous manner in which Clive attended to them was a marked contrast to the reception accorded to the Damned British Public at Somerset House. The work was just sufficient to keep us fully employed from

ten to five, and on slack days to rest ourselves and be thankful.

A more agreeable colleague than Clive the Registrar it would have been difficult to find. He was a brilliant conversationist, an excellent mimic, always ready with an appropriate anecdote or repartee, bubbling over with the innumerable funny bits of Dickens, and able to rattle on for the hour together in one continuous flow of wit and humour. In such sparkling company it was impossible to be dull. His irrepressible mirth was contagious, and from the moment I entered the room in the morning to the moment I left it in the afternoon, I was in the highest spirits, and intoxicated with his brilliant humour.

Added to these accomplishments—how different to the muddy conversation at the Custom-House, and the frivolous chatter of the clerks at Somerset House!—was a rare delicacy in dealing with our respective positions. Throughout the Service, I must confess, the clerks, as a rule, sink their superiority in their intercourse with the Writers; but I had not observed it done with such

gracefulness as in the case of Clive. There was none of the vulgar assumption I had noticed in the Voice. His easy, familiar speech, and genial smile, placed us on friendly terms at once. Life had never been so enjoyable since I shared the companionship of the witty Professor Guedremovitch at Moscow.

In a minor degree, much of what I have said about the accomplishments of Clive might be applied to many other clerks in the Post-Office. Of course Bumbles and boobies, and drones and dotards abound there as elsewhere in the Service. But, on the whole, the clerks at the Post-Office are certainly, as regards intellectual activity and ability to work, a superior set of men to the Barnacles at Somerset House, and half a century in advance of those in Thames Street. It would be interesting to know how much of this spirit has been fostered by the example of Edmund Yates, Anthony Trollope, Conway the actor, Coulson, and Harold Power, all of whom once held pens at the Post-Office, and whose brilliant success has set the whole of the staff in a ferment of

eager aspiration. The Writers also are a superior set, and embody among them a general's son, a baronet's heir, and a baronet.

Unfortunately for me, my pleasant career at Sixty-eight did not endure long. At the end of the week, Clive fell ill ; and when, after a few days' time, he turned up again convalescent, his colleague came back with him also. This return necessitated my discharge from my temporary position of Deputy-Registrar of Government Life Annuities, and rendered me once more a nomad.

Another job had sprung up in the meanwhile. It often happens that a Writer may flit about an office for years on a roving commission of this kind, as, once a department secures an extra hand from Cannon Row, the Barnacles are very loath to lose him. My destination this time was the Telegraph Branch. The room, Number Seventy-six.

Another *mauvaise quart d'heure*. The windows of the room were so blocked up with desks and books and boxes, that one could not see through the lower half. The upper part admitted a depressing view of a dirty expanse of wall and window across the well-

hole, and a scanty streak of dingy-leadensky above. The chief of the Branch was Mr. French—the present postmaster at Cyprus—a pleasant hard-working official of forty-five, who knew what he was about, and did his duties unobtrusively and yet with energy and precision. With him were two other clerks, equally attached to their pens, but scarcely so pleasant to work with. A fourth, a so-so sort of young man, had charge of me, and gave me the work I had to do.

There was no regular writer's seat in the room, and a horrid little sideboard, like a shelf in a pantry, was improvised instead in a corner, where, at a very awkward angle, with my right side exposed to the draught from the window, and my left side to the draught from the door, I led a life of torment and misery. The room was devoted to the affairs of the Central News, and therefore possessed for me a peculiar interest. My share of it, however, was the fag-end. I had to prepare for the telegraph clerks sundry sheets, denoting the particular class of news to be despatched to certain papers on par-

ticular days. The sheets were ruled off into close columns, and I had to insert the 'service' of news required, or initial the days of the week it had to be sent. Day after day I had to make these servile scratches. There was not the faintest spark of intellect required for the work. Scratch, scratch, scratch, for seven hours a day, with no one to speak to, no incident to break the monotony, and nothing to look at except the ink-stains on the yard and a half of yellow wall in front of me.

The most ignoble ten days of my career were spent at this horrid labour. I did not live during that wretched period. I hardly existed. Nothing would induce me to submit to it again. Rather than do so, I would migrate to Tourgay and become a nomad. A Kirghiz can at least claim that his life is manly, whatever views we may entertain about his barbaric nature. Many walks of life in London are such as the wretchedest savage would turn up his nose at and despise. Among these I would include the scratching at Seventy-eight. I should not have endured the ignominy so long, had I not been

buoyed up with the hope that I might obtain an insight into the manner the affairs of the Central News were conducted. Failing in this, I was glad when Christmas came round, and I could claim my holidays.

But although I might claim my outstanding holidays, it was a different matter to get them conceded. The Barnacle can take his holiday-leave when he likes, subject to the convenience of his colleagues. The aggregate of twelve days begrudged to the Writer, however, only becomes due towards the close of the year, and in consequence there is a general rush for leave at Christmas. I was warned that my claim would not be conceded, the more so as my discharge was already contemplated by the Office. Nevertheless, I sent it in. It led to an order to appear before the Chief Clerk.

It is a remarkable circumstance, distinguishing the Barnacle profession from all others, that the higher a clerk mounts in rank, the less he has to do. The Chief Clerk, as a rule, is a fixture that does nothing at all. Were I to include the Chief Clerk at

the Post-Office in this structure, it might lay me open to a case of libel, so I will say nothing about him. If I had time I should like to dwell more fully upon this feature of the Public Service, for I find that among journalists, men of letters, business men, lawyers, and doctors, and what not; the more money a man earns in advancing in his profession, the harder he has to work for it. There is usually a decade, and sometimes two, during which such men are scarcely ever out of harness. In the Public Service, however, the more pay implies the less work, until a stage is at last reached where the only onerous duty devolving on a clerk is to sign the quarterly receipt for his £1,000 or £2,000 per annum.

The aged individual who held the position of Ganger to the Established Clerks, I found placidly engaged in the Barnacle pursuit of looking about him. He allowed me to stand in front of his desk, while, in vacillating tones, he informed me that my request could not be acceded to. The regulations of the department did not permit it after so short a service.

I put it to him that after December 31st I should have no claim to my holidays, and that of necessity I must take them before that date or lose them. As he seemed to desire I should do the latter, I suggested that a fresh regulation should be made to suit my case. I placed the matter before him philosophically :

‘Man,’ I said, ‘is not made to suit regulations, but regulations to suit man.’

But one might just as well talk Dutch to an octopus, as to endeavour to convey philosophy or common-sense to the intellect of a Barnacle of the old school. The Chief Clerk shook his head. All his life he had been engaged in the Barnacle pursuit of rendering man the slave of regulations, and he could not comprehend my revolutionary, not to say nihilistic, sentiment.

In the end I had to adopt a tone of indignation, and, following the example of Robinson the Writer, to create a scene. Barnacles hate scenes of any kind, and the Chief Clerk hastened me out of his room as soon as he possibly could.

In the afternoon, I received permission to

take my holidays from Christmas Eve, and on their expiration at the end of the year, to consider myself discharged from the Post-Office.

FOURTH WORDS.

ON returning from Cheltenham, I put my portmanteau into a cloak-room, and proceeded to the Post-Office. Here I had to waste the morning in obtaining my papers, and the afternoon in conveying them to Cannon Row. Nobody was in the waiting-room except two boy-messengers—one reading ‘Claude Duval,’ and the other counting his marbles. The Registrar speedily summoned me into his presence, and assured me I should receive an appointment in a few days’ time. I begged of him, if possible, to select me a post in a West-End office, and he made a note to this effect on my passport. I then went home to get out some circulars announcing myself as teacher of languages, for I had resolved, as soon as I could, to leave the Public Service.

A few days afterwards I received a notice, ordering me to present myself the following Monday at the Custom-House. I bit my lips with vexation. It was self-evident that I was going back with the annual tide to Old Chuff's.

My presentiment proved only too true. I was appointed to the same desk, I sat on the same stool, I had the same books set before me, and I was encompassed by the same Bar-nacles, not a whit changed during the twelve-month, except that Old Chuff seemed older and greyer, and Hobble more imbecile than of yore. The same inane ideas were trotted out by Ransom ; Slowboy gazed at the press with the same old vacant gaze ; and Crumpet the Writer directed the department in the same listless happy-go-lucky manner. As for the office itself, it appeared to my eyes to have grown dirtier and uglier, the passages had shrunk, the windows had dwindled in width, and the rooms had become mean and insignificant. Tried by the standard fixed by Somerset House and St. Martin's-le-Grand, the Custom-House was a stale and shabby building, and the clerks a dull and dowdy set.

Fortunately I did not remain long at Old Chuff's. A permanent writer passed a second-class exam., and was appointed to the Seaman's Registry Office. I applied for his seat and obtained it. I became then a Permanent Writer and a Junior in Tuttle's Branch.

AT THE CUSTOM-HOUSE AGAIN.

TUTTLEY'S BRANCH.

It was a happy morning that saw me removed from Old Chuff's room to Tuttle's Branch. It is true that I left the grand old spire of St. Dunstan's behind me; but novelty consoles us for many a loss, and the sight from my new desk window of the ships and the wherries passing up and down the river was a pleasant recompense for the change of seat.

An impression prevails abroad that the gentlemen of the multifarious branches of the great and glorious Barnacle fraternity are very similar in style and character. This is a great mistake. The difference between a Thames Street Barnacle and a Barnacle at Somerset House is as distinct as that between

a Tartar and a Teuton ; and a comparison of a Post-Office Barnacle and a Fellow at the F. O. reveals equal points of dissimilarity. But while on the one hand there is a certain style about the West-End Barnacles which, to an experienced eye, renders their recognition easy at a glance, the Barnacles in Thames Street are of a totally different breed, and are no more to be confused with the former than an Englishman can be mistaken for a Hindoo. The Barnacles of the East-End are the Pariahs of the Civil Service.

In good truth it certainly does require a large amount of courage for a person accustomed to refinement to content himself with the surroundings of a clerkship in Thames Street. To get there, in the first place, one has to toil like a canvassing clerk to force his way through the dense mass of City serfs that crowd the narrow paths of Eastcheap at ten o'clock in the morning, and to run the gauntlet of a hundred streams of porters, who, with boxes of oranges or bales of wool upon their massive shoulders, try at every crossing to carry away your chimney-pot, or inflict a juicy mark upon your overcoat. As

for going quietly down the lanes that lie between Eastcheap and the Barnacle Office in Thames Street, it is only an experienced hand that can avoid being driven back, and dodged, and worried, and bumped into desperation by the heavily-laden costermongers and porters, walking in exasperating files up and down those avenues. Even supposing one takes the quieter cut down Idol Lane and past St. Dunstan's Belfry, and safely reaches the steaming cookshop at the foot of the hill, there is still the rubicon of Thames Street to cross, and, at ten o'clock in the morning, this odious thoroughfare is jammed with ponderous fish-vans, costermongers' barrows, and fish-dealers' carts, while throngs of Billingsgate porters, their blouses dripping with slimy fish-water, and the boxes of herrings or soles on their heads scattering drops of filthy ooze, swarm noisily around each vehicle. To evade the horses' heads, to keep clear of the muddy fish-boxes, to steer six inches away from every porter's blouse, to retreat from a burly coster advancing with a dripping basket of mussels, and at the same time to dodge the slouching roughs and screeching fishwives—these are

the morning perils that beset the Thames Street Barnacle. Nor are they all. While daintily striving to keep his clothes from impact impure, he must carefully guard his feet, or they will sink ankle-deep beneath a mass of offal, or slide off the greasy stones and cast him headlong into the dangers he seeks to avoid.

What wonder, then, that the Barnacles hate to hear the name of Billingsgate, and that they believe—as the whole of them fervently do—that it is worth all their salary to have to pass every morning through such an ordeal of fish ? But even when they, breathless, and suffering agonies of indignation at the spots of mud and slime upon their shoulders, reach the river side of the street, and pass through the dirty portals into the Custom-House, the horrors of Billingsgate are not yet left behind. Its influence is felt in the filthy stairs, the dirt-stained walls, the atmosphere redolent of herrings, sawdust, and chloride of lime, and in the market cries that come in with the market smells through every open window. Ugly, mean, and smoky outside ; frowsy, old-fashioned, and dirty within ;

with dreary corridors, dismal rooms, and gloomy wastes of wall and window, how can man develop the nobler side of his nature in such oppressive circumstances as these, with everything to drag him down to the Billingsgate level, and nothing to raise him above it? It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Barnacles of Lower Thames Street are drawn from the lower suburban class, that they are always old and 'fluffy,' that their mind is sluggish, their habits tainted with the tricks of Billingsgate, their conversation coarse and slangy, and their whole demeanour suggestive of a medley of the lawyer's clerk, Thames Street rough, Custom-House officer, and waterman. Wherever they go, they carry about with them a rank waterside flavour, and unconsciously convey to the minds of all they meet, by their manners and speech, that they have been educated amidst the coarsening influences of Billingsgate.

At the top of sixty dirty stairs, across a corridor of surpassing darkness, and through a couple of creaking doors, was Tuttle's Branch. Three windows overlooked the river, three rows of desks projected from the

river wall, and were arrested before reaching the opposite side by a massive barrier of oak, which left sufficient space for the ledger bureaux and for a passage between the door of Sedley's room and the door leading into the Sealing-Wax Office and the departments beyond. Perhaps it was from the fact of this passage being an open thoroughfare that led to a less ostentatious display of do-nothingness on the part of my new colleagues. At any rate, in this fresh domicile newspapers were rarely seen, and books never, because of the fear (groundless, I believe) lest Sedley, with angry gaze, should issue softly from his well-oiled door and 'spot' the offending Barnacle, or that from the other end the head of the Sealing-Wax Office, himself an official of mighty power, should suddenly enter upon us and catch the culprit in the act. But there are more ways, and worse ways, of wasting public time than by poring over newspapers, discussing Deistic topics, or correcting the vouchers of the Barnacle Toothpick Supply Association (Limited), as at Old Chuff's. There is a way worse than any that I know of. That way is 'tippling.' Most of

the Barnacles in Tuttle's Branch were downright determined tipplers.

I suppose that the majority of mankind are predisposed by nature to be idle. The only difference between us lies in the fact of our having different ways of showing or concealing the defect. In Old Chuff's rookery it took the form of newspaper-reading and political discussion; in Tuttle's Branch, where the absence of privacy made both pursuits difficult, it assumed the shape of looking out of the window, or tipping (under the pretence of comparing accounts) at one another's desks. This I found out in less than half-an-hour after Tuttle had given me a ledger to go on with, discovering it by the streams of fragrant air that came across to my desk—brandy from one side, rum from another, and whisky from a third. There was also a resonant tinkling of glasses and a popping of corks, which varied pleasantly the vigorous scratching of Quemby's pen; and I early noticed, with perception quickened by novelty, that every Barnacle in the place worked with his hat on, that he had a feverish air, that he had a convivial habit of dropping

with a wink out of the room and dropping in again with a flushed face, and that when any of them spoke to me their breath told tales of stores of liquor lying below, hidden inside their waistcoat, and out of sight.

As I had known some of the Tuttle crew while acting as Tenpenny at Old Chuff's—to which place they used to resort to conspire with Hobble and Co., during Government hours, against the purse-strings of hearty old honest John Bull—I was very speedily at home with my new colleagues, and in a very short time I had acquired, I dare say, that *blasé*, know-all air which was considered the thing among them. The work upon which we were engaged was very simple. We every morning received from the outports batches of variegated returns, all more or less disfigured with the hideous scrawl that outport officers delight in, and these it was our duty to enter into musty ledgers, just as little boys enter simple addition sums into ciphering books. At the end of the month, with a prodigious display of action, necessitating three nights' overtime and three days' abstention from Bacchus, these little entries had to be

totalled up and carried into larger books, and these, in their turn, were passed on to Mugford's Branch, and there lost. Any one who has any notion of clerical work will see that this was not a difficult duty, and will probably place the intellectual force employed at a trifle above *nil*. Yet the Tuttlemites were all of them fully possessed with the idea of the importance of their labour, and religiously believed that if they did not get their totals ready by the second day of the month, in order to be issued by the Board of Trade for the confusion of the public, the English Empire would cease to revolve on its axis. Taken squarely all round, two hours' easy labour was the daily lot of them all; and if Tuttle himself did nothing, and Quemby did the work of two men, why, these exceptions only went the further to confirm the rule laid down.

Let me describe Quemby. He was a middle-sized, middle-aged man, with a protuberant waistcoat, massive stooping shoulders, a bull-neck, long ferocious whiskers (like the caricature of a bandit in the play), florid face, and small, good-humoured, bronze

eyes. He was rather careless in the matter of collar and necktie, and paid very little heed to the appearance of his cuffs. I would describe his hair, which was not very luxuriant at the top of his head, but as he always wore his hat over it, cocked ~~convivially~~ on one side, my doing so would add nothing to the picture. He had entered the Service a quarter of a century ago, had never got beyond the degree of a Permanent Writer, with a salary of £104 per annum, and was usually pointed out as a man who had been shabbily treated by the Government, and whose forlorn, shabby appearance was in no small measure the outgrowth of his chagrin. He and I, and two of the Barnacles, did identical work, only the volume of his was twice as much as either of ours, and his salary certainly did look incongruous side by side with the £400 of Tuttley and the £350 which Chinnoek and Maggs enjoyed. From what I learned from Chinnoek, who was his confidant, the Permanent Writer had had a curious career before drifting into the haven of Tuttley's Branch. The son of a Mincing Lane merchant who had failed in business, he had left

the Bluecoat School to take up a clerkship in a City office ; and thence, when this also failed, he had passed into the Barnacle Service, where he obtained employment as a Tenpenny Writer. After a few years' hard labour in the Long-Room, a reorganization had converted his engagement into a permanency, and he had migrated, with £2 a week, to Tuttle's Branch. Here, year after year, he had done the same work as the rest of the Barnacles, but with this difference : that while his work, from a peculiar expansion of a particular branch of trade, had grown greater and greater every year, theirs, from an opposite cause, had shrunk in volume ; and with this drawback there was the additional misfortune that the Barnacles' salaries went on annually increasing, jumping by increments up the scale of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, while his poor little pittance stood arrested, like Joshua's sun, at the fatal £104. The only consolation he could take to himself was, that many other Writers were stranded in the same shallows of injustice as himself, and that possibly, by some miraculous stroke of fortune, the broom of Reform some day might be brought to bear upon the department, and that amidst the hurly-burly,

and kicking and cuffing of the Barnacles for plums, he might manage to pick up a currant or two on the verge of the scuffle.

At the same time, I must confess that he had played his cards in life very badly. Generous to a fault, he was the most improvident of men. His debts were the joke of the office ; his careworn wife, toiling at home with a tribe of small children, the object of every one's pity ; and prosperous Barnacles, flushed with liquor, who patronized his company, and took him down to the Bar to ' lush ' a dozen times a day, treated him much in the same manner that children do a monkey or a lively punchinello. His domestic affairs were no business of mine, whatever amusement they may have afforded the office, so that I need not dwell upon them ; but I believe that out of his weekly two pounds, his wife allowed him a share of seven shillings and sixpence—eighteenpence for his 'bus, and six shillings for his dinners. However, he knew so little how to take care of himself, that, instead of confining his dinner expenditure to the regular shilling a day, as Benjamin Franklin would have done (aye, and have saved sixpence out

of it too), the improvident fellow used to lavish it away during the early part of the week, and towards the end had to walk to town and live on his omnibus money. The first three days in the week he termed the 'Silver Age,' because he mostly had three or four shillings in his pocket; the last four composed the 'Bronze Age,' when his finances were reduced to halfpence, and he had to subsist largely upon the eleemosynary refreshment 'stood' by his convivial *confrères*.

On Monday, say, he would return from the refreshment-room at two o'clock, his countenance beaming with satisfaction. Lolling luxuriously against the back of his stool, he would throw open his frock-coat and beg me to place the palm of my hand upon his waistcoat. I would thereupon put the tip of my finger upon the button-hole, through which, had he possessed a watch, the chain would have passed.

'Press!' he would say.

'All right,' I would answer.

'What's it like?' he would demand.

'Like a Dutch cheese,' would be my reply.

‘Just so,’ he would say, rubbing the protuberant part of his waistcoat with tender delight. ‘Look here,’ slapping it. ‘Eighteen-pennorth lies stowed away beneath my waistcoat buttons. A plate of roast pork, apple sauce, trimmings, two breads, a plate of turnip-tops, two half-pints of “bitter,” and a college pudding. Ye gods ! a glorious feast. Could Croesus, with all his coin, have been better fed than that ?’

Towards the end of the week, when his finances had become shattered [by these and other excesses, he would enter the office ruefully, walk slowly up to his stool with an air of disdain, throw himself down desperately on it, and, spreading out his waistcoat, would again beg me to press the bottom button. Just to humour him, I would do so.

‘What’s it like ?’ he would demand.

‘Like a balloon,’ I would reply, knowing the answer he wanted.

‘Just so,’ he would continue ; ‘blown out like a balloon—only two penn’orth to-day—two penny buns and a glass of water—a wretched “tuppenny buster !” Ah ! me, what a fall for a man who knows Latin and Greek,

and who once carried off prizes for Homer. I have Virgil, Euripides, Socrates, and all the other "ees" of classic fame in my head, but anything but ease in my stomach. Classic study, forsooth!—I would give all the classics in the universe to know how to cobble shoes, and be independent of this beastly Barnacle Service.'

The prominence which I have given to Permanent Writer Quemby before dealing with the Senior Clerk of the Branch, may lead one to presume that Samuel Tuttle, Esq., was a very inferior mortal. As a matter of fact, the functionary in question was not remarkable for his official or private capacity. Ostensibly the head of the department—*vide* the Thames Street Official List—he personally exerted no more influence over his subordinate clerks than a Cheshire cheese does over an eclipse of the sun. He was a hook-nosed, grey old man, with a marvellous capacity—for refreshment. His faculties, if he had any, were never prominently exerted, except in this particular respect. All day long he would sit mouse-like before his ledger, making no other movement than that of his hands in adding up the figures. This he varied half-a-

dozen times out of the six hours by eating sandwiches or home-made cake, and washing them down with claret, of which he kept a large supply in his desk. He was always supposed to be intent on that interesting operation of 'making blood;' but I never observed that the St. Julien he drank in the office, or the stronger cordials he drank out of it, had any appreciable effect in distending his shrunken veins. He had nerves so delicate that they required screwing up every half-hour, and I shudder now with horror when I see in my mind's eye the spectacle of the palsied hand raising the little wine-glass to the ashen lips that quivered hungrily for the alcoholic stimulant. A Senior Clerk with a frame so shattered could not be expected to shine much in the path of responsibility, nor yet on the lower level of office routine. His life at the Branch, in a word, was made up of muddle and fuddle.

Quemby, who used to check the old man's work (fancy the farce of a Writer checking a Senior Clerk!), would at times roar out with bitter anger at the blunders the dipsomaniac made; and to see the corpulent Writer rising

from his seat, rage fluttering his ferocious whiskers, to hurl a ball of paper at the head of the miserable old man, whose books were a jungle of error, was a sight more conducive to hilarity than to the dignity of the department. Between the one and the other there was a chronic feud, caused partly, I believe, because Tuttley would not stand Quemby treat at the bar, being of an avaricious disposition, but more especially on account of the increase of work which the old man's failings threw upon the Writer's shoulders. Everybody knew that the Senior Clerk was altogether unfit for his work, that his labour was simply a sham, and that he was only kept on that he might in time retire with a larger pension. But I question whether it would not have been better for all parties concerned if he had been cut off, root and branch, from the Barnacle Office, with many other dullards and dotards of thirty years' standing.

How did it come to pass, you will ask, that such an incapable old man as Tuttley was allowed to rule the destinies of a dozen clerks? The answer is simple. Seniority. The official gauge in Sedley's Section was Seniority;

and thus, no matter how imbecile a man might be, his weight of years carried him along from post to 'post, whether he were fitted for it or not, until he reached the sere and yellow leaf and became a pensioner. The Barnacles had thus a horrible interest in each other's health. To wish one man prosperous promotion was nothing more nor less than to wish that somebody else's shoes were vacant. There were clerks in the department who studied with a deadly interest the Office sick-list, and some among them had been known to be first at a dead man's house to assure themselves that his stool was ready for them to sit on. A general sentiment prevailed that merit, not seniority, ought to be the standard of promotion. Yet, one and all the Clerks were united in striving to keep the Writers down, to prevent them poaching on the Barnacle preserves, and any attempt to remove the incapable Senior would have been firmly resisted, as being a dangerous precedent which might in time react upon themselves.

Every one will agree, I think, that there ought to have been some better means of

keeping Tuttley under control. In a City warehouse the manager knows the work of everybody, and he repeatedly, during the day, takes the trouble to see that the staff are all in proper order. But in Sedley's Section, as in the Post-Office, as in Somerset House, and as in every public office I have yet heard of, the reverse was the case. Acting, as the Secretary did, as manager of the score or so of Branches that constituted his Section, one would have thought that he would have paid frequent visits to his subordinates, to see that the work was going on in a proper manner. But I did not see the Secretary pay a single supervisory visit to any branch the whole time I was there, and this absence of control is an essential feature that marks the difference between Barnacleness and business. Alone in his spacious but barren room, the Secretary sat daily from ten to four, working with an industry that was the admiration of every clerk. He was a tall, energetic man, with a square determined face, and, I believe, had risen to his post partly through favouritism, but certainly, to a large degree, by merit. All day long, when the senior clerks of the

various branches paid him visits, they found him steadily driving his quill across continents of foolscap. He scarcely ever left his room, and thus knew nothing of the goings-on at Old Chuff's, or the tippling recreations of the Barnacle crew at Tuttley's. His grip over routine correspondence and red tape was marvellous, but he had not learnt the first and fundamental principle of good government, that the controller of any establishment, whether it be a warehouse, a manufactory, or a public office, must not sit on his stool all day if he wants to keep the machinery of his place from drifting out of order. In a Section so loosely conducted, no wonder that men like Hobbles and Tuttley flourished and made their way, while the Juggernaut of Seniority rolled remorselessly over Merit, and ground down every man of enterprise to the stagnant level of Thames Street.

Tuttley sat next to the window on Sedley's side of the room. Close to him sat Maggs. Jedediah Maggs was a little bald-headed man who had formerly been in the furniture line, and of whom it was said that he had been pitchforked into the Service, twenty

years previous, by an impecunious secretary who could not pay his bill. He was a terrible bore, was Maggs, with an inexhaustible flow of anecdotes about his wife's relations (the Thomas Ap Joneses, of Kidwelly), which he would narrate by the hour together if he could catch a listener in the mood. The partner in his clerical labours was Chinnoek, a tall, hairy, loosely-jointed man, who outwardly flourished 'on his 'creature comforts,' although inwardly they affected his speech and his memory. This latter drawback, however, was only another instance of the foresight of Providence, as Maggs was able to chatter to him without much fear of being interrupted by the other's tongue (Chinnoek often could not get beyond a rattle), and his stories of the Thomas Ap Joneses he could recite over and over again, and each time receive his hearer's applause and attention. I am afraid that it was this circumstance of Chinnoek being a capital lay figure to talk to, that led me to converse with him a good deal, and it was from him that I received a good straightforward blow one day, when, with the ingenuousness of a Junior, I expressed to him

the candid opinion 'that really, you know, we ought to work a little harder for our money.'

'Not at all, Marvin,' said he, after a preliminary rattle; 'if in the City you had the offer of a bargain, would you not accept it? And what is the Barnacle Service but a bargain? The Government says, "Here are so many situations at £300 a year—who'll have 'em?" A scramble takes place, and we get a situation with nothing to do. Who's to blame? Certainly not the Barnacle. If, to-morrow, your former employer, Mr. Thomas, of Watling Street, were to offer me a sleeping partnership in his firm, with a percentage of £5,000 per annum, I should be a fool not to accept it; and what is the Barnacle Service but so many sleeping partnerships, and John Bull but Mr. Thomas?'

Each of these three clerks kept a little private store in his desk, and every month a wine-merchant called to square accounts. I believe that the empty bottles were changed for full ones before the office hours began. At regular intervals, Tuttley, Maggs, and Chinnoek would visit each other and drink each other's health behind the screen afforded

by a raised-up desk lid. At equally regular intervals, by way of a change, they used to go downstairs to the refreshment-bar, and treat each other there; and these little interruptions, added to lunch and dinner, made the official six hours pass away in a pleasant and profitable manner. Sometimes Quemby was asked to assist in these conferences, which he would do with the utmost good-humour, for his thirst was quite as unquenchable as that of the rest of the Barnacles, the only difference being that he had inferior means of enjoying it. Quemby also used to be taken down to the bar to enliven the Barnacles with his wit, and his jokes were in such request all over the office, especially among the Jolly Dogs of Duncan's, that it was the regular thing for the members of that showy set to call and take him out.

In these applications for his company, Quemby always stood on his dignity, and acted throughout as though he himself were the donor of the drink. Irreverent Dogs, eye-glass in eye, and hat cocked carelessly at the back of their heads, would sometimes enter the room, and, leaning over the oaken screen,

would demand, with a wink at Chinnock, where Quemby was. The person thus disrespectfully designated would dip his pen in the ink, and dash furiously across the page.

‘Have you a *Writer* Quemby, here?’ the Jolly Dog would then demand.

Quemby would give his whiskers a flourish and become more engrossed in his work than ever.

The irreverent inquiries respecting the existence of the permanent writer would go on for a length of time, to the infinite amusement of Tuttley’s Branch (it takes very little to tickle a Thames Street Barnacle), until the farce would come to an end with the demand whether *Mr.* Quemby, or Henry Quemby, *Esq.*, was in, with particular stress upon either of the two handles.

‘At your service,’ Quemby would then reply, springing enthusiastically from his seat, and rushing through the doorway of the oaken screen to boisterously embrace his friend.

Then, as he opened the green-baize door to depart for the lower regions, he would pay a compliment to the superior official position

of Tuttley by saying, with a leer at us all :

‘Sir, the Refreshment Department wish me to examine their whisky returns;’ or, ‘Mr. Tuttley, sir, there’s a surplus of Double X on the lower floor, and they want me to correct the error.’

If he was unusually lively he would burst out into a bit of doggrel French :

‘Mossoo Tootlee, sahr, je vais down the stairs avec mon ami pour partaker avec lui un glass de la bittah bière;’ or, ramming his hat well down over his forehead, he would spread out his whiskers, and declaim with a theatrical flourish :

‘Horatius Tuttleus, fellow-citizens and Romans ! I go to shed my patrician blood for Rome. Farewell, Romans all !’

Quemby’s punchinello tricks on these occasions were the salt that seasoned the office and prevented the Barnacles from being driven to distraction by the hideous monotony of their daily entries and their monthly addition sums.

* * * * *

Once a month, as I have before stated, Tuttle's Branch had a bout of overtime. There was no particular reason for this, nor yet for similar overtime at Old Chuff's, or in any other department, because, with very little energy on the Barnacles' part, the work could have been easily done within the cycle of the official six hours. But immemorial custom had ordained that the clerks in Tuttle's Branch should work till eight on the last three days of the month, and as the money for this purpose was yearly voted by a wise and discriminating Parliament, it would have only been flying in the face of Providence not to have stayed for it. Besides, what could the Barnacle office have done with the annual grant for overtime if it had ~~not~~ been so applied. It might, it is true, have been spent in ameliorating the pay of the Writers ; but sentiment does not form part of the Thames Street composition ; and even had the Barnacles been generous towards their poorer lay-brothers, would not the latter, with the proverbial ingratitude of impecunious men, have clamoured for more ?

As Hobble very justly remarked on one

occasion, looking up from a petition which he was composing, demanding from the Treasury a rise of £100 a year to the Barnacles all round: 'The Tenpenny Writers entered the service with the knowledge that they were to receive only £78 a year, and no more; and why, therefore, should they complain?' Certainly not, Messrs. Hobble and Co.; it is only the three, the four, and the five-hundred-pounder Barnacles who should fume, and fret, and threaten, to go over *en masse* to the other party if the party in power does not 'fork out.'

At four o'clock on the overtime days we used to 'sign off' on the regular 'sheet,' and go out, either to refresh ourselves at the bar, or to take a 'constitutional' along that avenue of odour—Thames Street. The extra sheet had to be signed punctually by five-and-twenty to five, when it was taken away to the Sealing-Wax Office, or Sedley's room, and there detained till a quarter to eight.

The overtime farce commenced by the Barnacles getting out the monthly ledgers to make a display of work. Afterwards they gathered round the fire, or dawdled over an

extra wash and brush-up till five o'clock. A vague impression would then pervade them that really, you know, we ought to do something; and squaring their elbows before their desks, they would work for half-an-hour 'like one o'clock,' (as Chinnock expressively termed it), being encouraged thereto by the jokes and capers of Quemby, who, in his capacity of 'Directing Manager of the Overtime Tea Association,' supervised the arrangements for boiling the kettle. Precisely as St. Saviour's bells chimed half-past five across the water, the spurt would cease; and the whole of Tuttley's crew, perspiring with self-satisfaction at their unusual display of industry, would gather in the space between Johnson's desk and the fire, and their picnic would begin. Chinnock looked after the teapot, Jedediah cut the bread and butter, Johnson washed the watercress which Quemby had brought home in his hat from Billingsgate, or displayed the winkles or shrimps that had arrived from the same place in somebody else's coat-tail pockets. Other little luxuries in the shape of a cucumber, a German sausage, a pork-pie, or a lobster, would also be spread

on Johnson's desk ; and then, to use that gentleman's expression (the Thames Street Barnacles delight in slang), the Tuttle crew would have a 'stunning blow-out.'

Sometimes Sedley would pass through on his way to the Sealing-Wax Office, and a picturesque sight would reveal itself to the secretarial vision of little Maggs holding on with one hand to the watch-chain button of Chin-nock's waistcoat, and between intermediate bites at a slice of bread and butter grasped in the other, telling him how Mrs. Jones's mother's aunt's grandfather recovered from an unusual form of small-pox ; of Johnson doing a double-shuffle under the inspiration of a lobster-claw ; of Quemby with both hands ramming a huge sandwich of water-cress down his throat, to the distended astonishment of his whiskers ; of Garway scooping out the shell of a crab with a teaspoon ; and of the writer Sankey—who did not belong to the picnic party—devouring a home-made pie behind the evening paper. With praiseworthy discretion, the Secretary never noticed such convivial scenes, but passed on to his destination, and the Barnacles

would continue their festive sports till six. The remaining two hours were devoted to occasional spurts of work, interspersed with witty orations from Johnson (the wag of Duncan's Branch), with conferences behind the desk-lid of the tippling trio, and with the departure of Quemby to cross the Rubicon or to view the Forum from the banks of the turbid Tiber.

As for Tuttle himself, he acted a very minor part during the overtime farce of 'How Not to Do It.' Bending, mouse-like, over his ledger, he would accept without a word the tea and the claw of a lobster which Maggs would send him, and the only expression of vitality we could detect in him would be when Quemby replaced the old man's whiskey with water, or, inflamed with wrath at some outrageous blunder, aroused him into life with a well-delivered shot of a ball of blotting-paper on the top of his nose. There were occasions when this boisterous treatment would be carried too far, and the Senior Clerk, trembling all over with rage, would hurl a ledger across the desk at the delinquent, or pursue him across stool and desk with the messenger's broom from the passage.

One little incident of this character I well remember. Quemby had pinned on the old man's coat, as he went along the corridor to his dinner, the following placard :

'There was a little old Jew named Tut,
With a head like Methuselah's nut ;
And wherever he went,
With his little back bent,
The people all cried " Tut, Tut ! " '.

And the Senior Clerk did not discover the indignity until he had reached the refreshment-bar. Foaming with rage, he seized a carving-fork and hurried back to the Branch to have his revenge on his tormentor. Quemby did not notice him till the old man reached his stool. Dismayed at Tuttley's look, he beat him back with a batch of shipping notes, and then sprang upon the desk to effect his escape across it. As he did this Tuttley made a lunge with the carving-fork, but missing the mark he intended, he pierced the writer's coat-tails at the very moment that Quemby, his foot slipping, fell heavily on the desk and burst with a crash through the desk-lid. The devastation was frightful, and entirely brought back the

Senior Clerk to his senses. Twelve prime bottles of crusted port, which Maggs had bought at a recent sale and stowed away in a vacant desk, were irreparably ruined ; and I do not know who presented the sorriest spectacle, Jedediah cursing at his loss, Tuttley leaning against the wall and in a white faint from his fit of passion, or Quemby panting helplessly in a puddle of port. I feel persuaded that the ' row ' would have got to the ears of Sedley had not Johnson just then arrived from dinner. He at once restored Tuttley with a bumper of whiskey and water, and sent him back trembling to the bar. Maggs he quieted with a promise (never fulfilled) that we should all subscribe something to replace the port. And Quemby he hauled from his embarrassing pinnacle and placed before the fire, where the wretched Writer, carving-fork dangling from his coat-tails, stood dripping with port-wine and perspiration. After a little persuasion he got him to take off his trousers, and these he washed in Maggs' basin and dried before the fire, while Quemby, with an overcoat thrown over his port-stained pants, sat on Sankey's stool, close

under the lee of the screen, and bewailed his unhappy fate. For a long time afterwards Tuttley and Quemby were deadly foes, and it was not until they went to the docks together with a tasting-order to try some prime '74 claret which the Writer's landlord had just received from abroad, that the two became friends once more.

At half-past seven on overtime evenings the Barnacles would wash off the effects of their terrific exertions with abundant soap and water, and depart at ten minutes to eight, inspired with the happy belief that they had done a tremendous day's work, and should deserve, at least, a couple of days' leave next week to make up for it. The first three evenings were always spent in the style I have indicated. The fourth—the first of the month—was quite different in character, and deserves to be separately treated.

On this particular evening, when only Quemby and Sankey and the Discloser remained behind in the Branch, there was always a reaction against the preceding nights of dissipation, and the Permanent Writer invariably betrayed this feeling the most.

Indeed, at all times, if he remained in dull company long, or failed to receive from Barnacle friends the customary number of 'two-penn'orths,' his courage sank down to zero, and if it fell lower than this point, which was invariably the case on overtime nights, the melancholy of the Writer was a sight pitiable to behold. On such occasions, when the vacant desks and deserted hat-pegs looked drearily towards Quemby, and Quemby gazed wistfully out of the window on the muddy river, drifting, like the leaden clouds above, to some unknown destination, the horrors would come upon the forlorn, broken man, and he would start from his seat and break out into a stream of lamentation and despair. 'My God! and this is life: slaving year after year in this fœtid hole; chained to an inkstand like a dog to his kennel; no hopes, no prospects; a ruined, blighted man. Family larger and poorer every year; wife older and feebler. Quemby himself wearing out like an old dust-rag; the joke of everybody—kicked by everybody; with no hope of bettering himself except by dying—and that a dubious, dubious game!'

‘I would try and pacify him—Sankey was mostly in Duncan’s Branch, comparing accounts, when these fits came on, and Quemby and I were alone—but in vain. The blues would grow blacker; he would pace between the desks, passionately beating his stool with rage; throw his ledger on the floor, kicking and cursing it, and finally, with a string of execrations against the Service, himself, and humanity, he would drop heavily upon his seat and blubber like a child. From this he would be aroused by somebody passing through the room—probably a five-hundred-pounder Barnacle. Quemby, ashamed at his tears being seen, would briskly raise his head, scatter about his shipping notes, and display an effusive amount of energy until the Barnacle’s back was turned, when he would seize me by the arm and point with a tragic air towards the door.

‘Look at that old dotard,’ he would hoarsely whisper, ‘he entered the place years after I did, has never worked half so hard, has never done a stroke of work more difficult, yet he is getting £500 a year, and will have a pension some day; while I, working

year after year at £104, will be kicked out into the world—kicked out by him, too, most likely, with a string of platitudes about resignation, contentment, and God's providence—kicked out into Billingsgate as poor as a ha'porth of soap after a long day's washing. Is that justice? Is that your reorganized Service? Is that civilised life in a civilised city? Why should he take five times as much out of the till that I do?

I could not wholly sympathize with the wretched fellow, although I recognised in him a type of man born to misfortune and failure. Much of his breakdown I knew to be due to causes wholly in his own keeping, and irrespective of the treatment which he had received from the Civil Service. It was useless, however, to urge him to fight his way out of the mire, because he had no faith in himself, and none in his God or his Destiny. I am afraid, therefore, that the plan I adopted to soothe him will not recommend itself to my teetotal critics. I took a small flask of L. L. whiskey on such occasions to the Branch, and Quemby and I made a night of it.

Possibly, had I been a very moral young man, I might have tried upon his shattered nerves the effect of a tract or two, or have pointed out to him the path pursued by the sleek and unctuous Sankey.

This Permanent Writer had, early in his clerical career, set up a chandler's shop at Wapping, and attended the Thames Street Office now only that he might sell his goods among the Barnacles. Quemby, who patronized him, and who once or twice had been down to Wapping to make a trifling purchase—which, I believe, he omitted to pay for—spoke of the shop as being a neat little place, managed by a quick, industrious woman, whose hands were full with the wants of her customers, and the needs of nine small children.

Sankey had always a cheesemongery air about him, and we all felt, somehow, that it would have been more in keeping with his character if he had worn a white apron behind his desk at Tuttley's. That he made a good thing by his trade no one could doubt, for he daily brought to the office a carpet-bag crammed with things for his patrons. He

would get anything for a Barnacle, and get it so cheap, too, that his services were held in general request. But everybody who bought his services despised him—hatred of trade is a peculiarity of the Barnacles, though they are not above driving a hard bargain with the nation, or dabbling in Sugar and Tea Supply Associations; and when, on one occasion, little Maggs remarked to Quemby, who was whimpering to him, that he wondered he did not strike out an independent line for himself, as Sankey had done, the broken-down Blue-coat boy turned away in a huff, and would not speak to him for half an hour afterwards. Then, as Jedediah mixed for him a glass of prime Martell behind the screen of his desk-lid, I heard the mollified Writer earnestly exclaim in a whisper, that he had got too much Greek and Latin in him to care to sell soap and candles, and solemnly adjure Maggs, if ever his son reared a brood of Jedediahs, ‘to fling classics to the devil, sir, and give them all a trade!’

THE JOLLY DOGS OF DUNCAN'S.

It was the custom in Sedley's Section, as also in other departments of the Barnacle Office, to lend Writers to Branches that might be for the moment short-handed, and it was the operation of this custom that led to my passing a few days in April among the Jolly Dogs of Duncan's.

The Chief of the Jolly Dogs was a spectre well-known to loafers at Billingsgate. He was a thin debilitated man with hollow cheeks, fleshless calves, and skeleton shoulders, who was always convoyed slowly across Thames Street by the Barnacle beadle, and who took the balustrade side of the staircase as he toiled painfully up the sixty stone steps that led to his stuffy office. In accord-

ance with the proverbial law of contrasts, his subordinates were nearly all of them healthy, hearty mortals, whose only tendency to consumption lay in the consumption of liquor, and whose riotous laughter, pranks, and jokes, stood out in sharp relief to the sighs and gasps of Duncan.

The second in command to the Senior Clerk was Johnson, already mentioned as the patron of Quemby, and known all over the office by the rakish cut of his hat, and his fondness for an eyeglass.

When Duncan was away, which was very often the case, the Senior Clerk being a chronic invalid, Johnson took charge of the Branch, and the business was then carried on with that solicitude for the Derby favourite and the Oxford eight, and that contempt for import returns and outport statistics, characteristic of most of the Thames Street Barnacles. On these occasions the general flow of animal spirits peculiar to the Jolly Dogs would manifest itself in some such innocent form as frying cockles alive on Duncan's particular shovel, or in boiling to a lovely scarlet a lobster in Quemby's exclusive kettle.

There was even a tradition on record that a few years previous, Johnson had roasted a chicken for lunch in front of the fire, and that, before the price of oysters rose, he had kept a small tub of edible 'natives' perpetually replenished in his desk. The encroaching spirit of the age, however, had clipped the wings of these flights of fancy, and it was now considered the acme of audacity if some of Johnson's colleagues roasted a kidney at the end of their pens, or rendered the office odorous with the smell of desk-brewed punch.

The Jolly Dogs, in common with Hobble and Co., had many a bone to pick with the country for its greedy, parsimonious spirit in regard to their pay ; but I observed that they never adverted to the privileges they enjoyed in the shape of leave, and sick-leave.

In respect to these two particulars, which are the bane of a commercial career, and, indeed, of every other walk of life in which something else than mere dawdling is required, the Service holds a proud and conspicuous position. For what hard-toiling

City man, with, it may be, a close-fisted principal at his back, does not envy at times the spoonbill breed of young gentlemen who can get unlimited leave for the mere trouble of taking it?

I suppose it is within the experience of most people who earn their daily crust in the City, that the difficulty of obtaining an interval of leisure during the ten hours' toil at the desk or counter, is well-nigh insuperable, necessitating, at any rate, increased exertion afterwards; that a day's leave of absence is an event to be remembered for months to come; and that, finally, to stay away from work on account of sickness is almost a matter of impossibility, unless, indeed, the sufferer is utterly unable to quit his bed. These three little drawbacks to a commercial career are essentially those which are felt more keenly, I believe, than an inadequate salary, or a slackness in 'getting on.' Of course, if one has a pecuniary interest in a business, the matter is different; but I am referring to those innumerable discontented individuals who have fixed salaries, fixed hours of attendance, and fixed absence of

rapid promotion. These people, I have always thought, and never more so than when I was a Dog at Duncan's, must naturally feel the difference between their lot and that of the Barnacles, whom they are bound, with a part of their scanty income, to provide for and support.

The hours of a Barnacle, in the first place, ten to four, are not outrageously long, and they are certainly less so when a reduction of one hour is made for luncheon. But, providing a clerk is at his post at ten to sign on, and again at four to sign off, little or no trouble is taken between whiles to detain him at his desk. It is thus the easiest thing in the world, and a thing done every day in London, for a Barnacle to step in at ten o'clock and sign on, and then, after spending a day on business or pleasure somewhere in the metropolis, to reappear at five minutes to four, sign off, and go away without his absence being noted in the leave-book.

At the Custom-House, a clerk desirous of cribbing a day on the quiet, is hampered by the necessity of signing off at four o'clock.

At five minutes past that hour, the time-sheet is examined by the Secretary, or some other leading official, and an omission is instantly detected. At Somerset House, there is no signing off, and thus, after appending his initials to the sheet at 10.20 a.m., the clerk can go away the rest of the day and not come back till the morrow. The sheet also being only examined now and then by the Assistant-Secretary, it is open to him to run the risk of being away altogether, signing on for the absent day when he turns up afresh the next morning.

At the Foreign Office, no attendance list whatever is kept, and there a clerk can come when he likes, go when he likes, and stay away when he likes. It always struck me as being a flagrant piece of absurdity at the Custom-House, which is only surpassed in red-tapishness by Cannon Row, that such elaborate pains should be taken to ensure the attendance of the clerks at ten and four, without seeing that they remained at their work between whiles. But there is no accounting for the vagaries of Barnacle government. Grand as it may seem, with

its imposing public buildings, its mountains of blue books, and its oceans of tall talk and twaddle, it is, after all, nothing but a Dead Sea Fruit filled with red tape and gammon, a fraud to itself and the people.

As for Sick-Leave in the Service, *cela va sans dire* that the luxury can be had, *ad libitum*, for the trouble of staying away. I could mention the case of a clerk in the Tax Department, who took in one year nearly ninety days' sick-leave, and then, as a matter of right, coolly walked off at the end with his six weeks' holiday. Sick-Leave is never counted as service lost in our public offices. A clerk who is laid up with a pimple on Monday and Tuesday, will apply with all possible peremptoriness for a holiday on Thursday, and leave of absence will be accorded him, without any Secretary feeling it incumbent upon him to refer to the days already lost in the week. Even if a clerk is laid up with illness for half a year, his absence does not infringe on his holiday-leave, and he takes his month or six weeks when it suits him afterwards, as righteously as if he had been chained to the desk a

twelvemonth. A curious circumstance in connection with holiday-leave is, that as one goes westward the rate increases. At the Custom-House, the clerks take annually a month; at Somerset House six weeks; and at the Foreign Office, two months.

It is on account of such unstinted leave that, in judging the claims of Government clerks for increased pay, to make up for the ruinous depreciation in the value of money (their favourite plea), we must remember the many days of immunity from work they enjoy, and place this and other privileges on the credit side of the reckoning. A parliamentary return of the amount of leave enjoyed by each clerk in the Public Service, particularly in the West-End, would constitute a revolution that would amaze the public. I do not mean that the return should include only the regular sick-leave and holiday-leave, but that it should embody the little 'odd hours,' the 'day now and again,' the 'half week off' at the seaside, and so forth.

The abuses in the matter of leave will never be remedied until some central authority

is established, with power greater than that enjoyed by a Secretary; and it will be always possible for clerks to absent themselves without permission, so long as the rooms in a public office are left without due supervision. Everywhere I have to point out that the Secretary confines himself too much to his room, and that too little control is exercised over the head of the Branch, or, in common parlance, the 'Ganger.'

Otherwise, the two following incidents could not have become embodied among the traditions at Duncan's.

It was during overtime period, and Duncan, who had been away from his seat some weeks, announced his intention of staying with his subs till eight o'clock. The presence of the chief at the Branch suggested to Johnson that it would be a capital opportunity for letting off a little of that redundant foolishness which, sages say, is inherent in every breast, and which they declare we wrong our nature by suppressing. He therefore proposed at lunch-time, while old Duncan was away drinking claret with Tuttle, that the Dogs should relax themselves at the

Stingo Arms that evening. The proposal was carried without a dissentient voice, and a delegate was sent over to Harp Lane with Quemby, to instruct the landlord to prepare a brew of his primest punch.

At four o'clock, the Jolly Dogs signed off, and proceeded across Thames Street to the gloomy little den known as the Stingo Arms. Here they not only consumed the punch awaiting them in the cosy bar - parlour, but 'went in' also for a second supply, and then for a third. The result of this immoderation was to render them all so exceedingly lively that, on attaining the top of the staircase near Tuttle's Branch, Johnson treated the party with an original double-shuffle, while Quemby endeavoured to accomplish the difficult feat of sitting on his chimney-pot hat, which, as might have been expected, provoked a disastrous collapse on the part of that ill-used head-gear.

It then occurred to Johnson, that the party would have to present a respectable appearance on entering the Sealing-Wax Office to sign the attendance sheet; and therefore, poking Quemby's hat again into its original

shape, and ramming it carefully on the Writer's head, he placed himself in front of the Jolly Dogs, and led them along the passage. Arrived at the door, he arranged them in a line, with Quemby at the rear, and earnestly exhorted them, as they valued their peace of mind on the morrow, not to utter a syllable more than the seven contained in the sentence, 'Unavoidably detained.'

Perhaps a more difficult set of syllables, for the utterance of men who had lost all control over their articulation, could scarcely have been selected; but this did not occur to Johnson then, and, with the counter-sign still clinging to his tongue, he entered the office.

In front of the fire sat Grimer, the head of the Sealing-Wax Department, busily compiling for the Stationery Office, for the information of the Lords of the Treasury, and for the confusion of reformers in Parliament, a report on the recent loss of three quill pens and a magnum-bonum. He greeted Johnson with a quiet smile as the latter stooped over the sheet and searched the columns—which to him seemed double—for

the place for his name and '4.30.' A moment later, he turned towards the door to ascertain the cause of a noisy scuffle outside, and directly afterwards stared with astonishment as Quemby rolled in, followed by the rest of the Barnacles, each playing a tom-tom chorus on the top of his hat. Before Grimer could cry, 'Hush! hush!' twice, the Writer placed himself akimbo before the Sealing-Wax chief, and, with an air of the keenest relish, stuttered the chosen excuse: 'Urrerworder'blee deedeedeetained.' Then, marching up to the desk, he snapped his fingers at the sheet, and rolled out of the office again, carrying with him, in his course, the rest of his colleagues.

Johnson stayed behind to appease Mr. Grimer's anger, and to sign on for the Jolly Dogs. The indignant official, whose dignity had been wounded by the behaviour of Quemby, took some time to calm down, but in the end he agreed to overlook the matter; and there the affair ended, except that two of the Jolly Dogs were laid up for a week afterwards, their excuse, 'Unavoidably ill,' being accepted with complacency by their partial superior.

Some time after this, the second incident referred to took place.

Among the Writers employed in Duncan's office was a man of forty named Perkway, who had had many ups and downs in the course of his official career, but was now working his way into smoother waters as a teacher of Pitman's shorthand. This avocation, with his official one-pound-ten, brought him in a nice little income, and he was beginning to believe that the storms of life were over, when he caught a cold in going to Kentish Town to teach a class, and was laid up.

A Barnacle is allowed to be away on sick leave for months at the time, and to receive full pay during his absence. A Writer, however, unless he has seen a twelvemonth's full and approved service, is allowed no sick-pay whatever, and even if he has passed that line of demarcation, he is only permitted to receive three-quarter pay for a fortnight. From the former, no medical certificate is required, because, seeing he has unlimited sick-leave and sick-pay, it is hardly probable that he will take advantage of it.

From the latter, who loses money the moment he falls sick, a secure safeguard is provided against shamming, by compelling him to forward a properly authenticated medical certificate within sixty-eight hours of his falling sick. Failing this, he forfeits his claim to the fortnight's three-quarter pay altogether. The result of this beautiful system of safeguarding the public purse is what was originally expected by its Barnacle designers. Established clerks never take more than six months' sick-leave at the time, and the Writers are scarcely ever absent from their duties.

The news of Parkway's illness reached the Jolly Dogs concurrently with a communication from Duncan, stating that in consequence of the bad weather, he would take another week's (his sixth) sick-leave. Old Chuff, who exercised supervisory control over the Permanent Writers, expressed his opinion that it was monstrous that Parkway should be ill during the absence of his Senior; and he was still more embittered against the unfortunate teacher of shorthand when, in the course of the day, arrived a certificate, in which the honest but unlucky medical practi-

tioner expressed his belief that his patient 'had been overworking himself.'

'Overworking himself!' exclaimed Sedley, staring with astonishment at Old Chuff; 'what does the man mean? This is the first instance that has ever occurred in the Civil Service of a man making himself ill with over-work. It must be looked into. An inquiry must be made into the matter. I really never heard of such a shocking occurrence in all my life.'

An hour later the ukase went forth, and the next morning a special commission, composed of Old Chuff, Tuttley, Hobble, and a deaf old man named Mugford, from Mugford's Branch, assembled in solemn conclave to inquire into the 'shocking occurrence.' The investigation lasted the entire day, the proceedings being of such a weighty character that Old Chuff nearly exhausted the whole of the Jolly Dogs' debating power on the Eastern Question (and they all held separate and violent views on that glorious bone of contention); Mr. Tuttley emptied an entire flagon of Hungarian claret; Hobble revised most of the prices of the Barnacle Toothpick

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Supply Association; and Mugford uttered exactly twenty-seven 'Aye, ayes' which was twenty-one times more than was customary with that wooden-headed old fogey.

The practical part of the inquiry was eminently short and conclusive. The books of the absent Writer were examined, and the work found to be exactly half a day in arrear—at least, Johnson said so, and Johnson ought to have been a reliable authority, as his own were a week or two behindhand.

'This settles the question,' declared Old Chuff, as soon as the arrears had been proved. 'The case lies in a nutshell. Perkway has been neglecting his official duties for private engagements, and with his own private work has overworked himself. This cannot be allowed. The office will go to the dogs if the work is neglected in this shameful manner. I must expose the delinquent to his superiors, I really declare that I must.'

In this virtuous decision, Tuttley, who had just returned from taking a dram at the Stingo Arms, fully concurred. Hobble, looking up from 'drugs and fancy goods' in the Barnacle price-list, thought that Perk-

way most decidedly should be made an example of. And Mugford, who had heard nothing of what was going on, chimed in with the croak: 'Aye, aye, sir; aye, aye!'

The consequence of this verdict was that when, next week, Parkway returned to Duncan's, he found a fresh Writer sitting on his stool, and his name erased from the timesheet. He had hardly time to notice these changes, and the nods and winks of the clerks, when Simmons the messenger came and took him off to Sedley. Loud tones were afterwards heard in the Secretary's room, and threats that were strange to the Office. Parkway indignantly denied that he had neglected his books, and asserted, and with truth too, that he did more work than any three of the Jolly Dogs put together. But Sedley gave a deaf ear to the Writer's assertion. He said that four competent men—all of them Seniors—had examined his books, and he had no doubt whatever as to the correctness of their decision. Parkway then declared that he would go off at once to the Board, and lay before that august body of

Bumbles a statement of his wrongs. But he knew too well the uselessness of such procedure. The Jolly Dogs of Duncan's, to conceal their own shortcomings, would be sure to support the Commission in all that Old Chuff said, and he would only lose his time for weeks, may be for months, before the matter ended. And even then, if successful, he would be sure in time to be supplanted in his seat, and out of revenge to be superseded.

He therefore resolved to try his luck afresh at Cannon Row, and listened calmly as Sedley strove to smooth down his ruffled feathers.

'The fact is,' said the candid Secretary, 'the work we have here is not good enough for you. It demands no display of talent. You would do far better in some West-End office ; and, if you like, in sending back your papers, I will drop a line to Cannon Row about you. The Secretary there may be able to place you at the Treasury—where intellect is sadly needed—and there your knowledge of shorthand will be of value to the office. I will give you the best of characters

in your report, and, as we must part, let us part the best of friends, without another word.'

And thus, having cajoled Perkway into a good humour, and packed him off to Cannon Row, the Secretary squared his elbows again before the desk, and, with official obliviousness, forgot the promise he had made the moment before to the Writer.

FIFTH WORDS.

IN the spring, I formed Linguistry classes, and completed my preparations for quitting the Civil Service. I found that life at Tuttley's was having an evil influence on my character. I felt myself growing as lazy as Hobbie and the rest. To stimulate my energy I determined to cut myself off from the Barnacle fraternity, and to swim or sink with Linguistry and the Press.

I made no secret of my connection with the *Globe*. It was my first and my only newspaper, and I was vain of my connection with it.

In times gone by, the existing City editor of one of the London daily papers had been for a while a Writer at Tuttley's, and during his sojourn there had exercised an influence

which I aspired to wield also. I did a deal of my translation work at Thames Street—I have said I had four hours' leisure every day—and when my translations grew in number and my pupils dragged upon my time, I hoisted in the Branch the circular printed on the next page but one, and in June I left the Service.

In the summer, I became connected with the *Morning Advertiser*, and this, with the *Globe* and my Russian engagements at the Royal Military Academy, made life pass in a pleasant and profitable manner. By degrees, the necessity of leaning upon linguistry as a crutch to journalism wore off, and it became in my power to cast it away in the same manner that I had already done its sister support, the Civil Service. But there was one period of the day, between noon and five o'clock—after dinner, and before I began work afresh in the evening—which I did not wish to waste, and as I wanted relaxation during this interval, I decided upon opening a Linguistic Institute in Regent Street, and lecturing to large classes on the merits of the 'Mastery' system. I had already

arranged the scheme, and was on the point of leaving my home, one July morning, to take over the requisite apartments, when the postman stopped me at the gate with an official Civil Service letter. It proved to be an inquiry from Cannon Row whether I would accept a special vacancy at the Foreign Office.

What course was I to take ?

From my earliest thought I have been accustomed to regulate my conduct by one standard—my Destiny. I am painfully aware that I have no talents, that I possess none of the advantages which help a man onward in his career, and, that I have nothing to propel me into my prospective position, except my belief in my Destiny and my determination to fulfil it. What that Destiny may be, is of no concern just now. We can discuss it better twenty years hence. Suffice it to say, that measured by this standard, it became my duty to go to the Foreign Office. I accordingly went.

The Linguistry Institution scheme was thrown aside. The 5,000 circulars, printed in readiness for the campaign, were packed away, never, I hope, to be wanted again.

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tried to be linguists by the prevailing grammar system.

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Russians, who are proverbially splendid linguists, learn the language  
first and the grammar afterwards.

English people, whose ill success at linguistry is equally notorious,  
reverse the process, and rarely get beyond the first stage.



The Linguistry classes were dispersed ; and, on the 16th of July, 1877, I commenced my career at the public department, which Mr. Poland, with ungraceful enunciation, persisted in calling in court 'The Forrin Awfis !'

## THE FOREIGN OFFICE

COPYIST TO THE QUEEN.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE does not usually start into life until merchants in the City, fatigued with a hard morning's work, seek sustenance and relaxation at a luncheon-bar. It is rare, indeed, if the whole of the staff is assembled before the City has lunched and gone back to office again. And, as a rule, the hour in the evening that sees the departure of men from Mincing Lane for their suburban residences, witnesses also the closing of a department on which the honour of England so largely depends.

As a house of call to gossip and smoke, and read the morning papers, the Foreign Office is a most admirable institution. It so

nicely takes up the time between the one o'clock lunch and the seven o'clock dinner. I doubt not that many men envy the Downing Street clerks in their easy and convenient hours at the luxurious F. O.

The approach to the Foreign Office Club—one can hardly term it a house of business—is by a dingy and dirty *cul de sac*, or 'deaf avenue,' as Russians would call it, which is graced by the impressive name of Downing Street. On reaching the end of this blind alley, where the hideous residence of the Prime Minister blocks the way to St. James's Park, one observes, opposite, an arch of Portland cement, usually guarded by a soldier. Two doors open upon the parallel footways under the arch, one giving admittance to the Passport-Office—the only department of the F. O. having intercourse with the vulgar herd, the 'damned British Public'—and the other, on the right hand, leading to the mysterious interior of the diplomatic shrine. The architect who designed the Foreign Office was so wrapped up with his bits of polished granite and slips of coloured marble, stuck, like almonds in French hardbake, all over the

building, where they now look hideous with their garnish of soot, that he quite neglected the internal arrangements ; and thus, if you enter at this door, ten chances to one you blunder against the mean little stone steps in the darkness, and inflict abrasures upon your temper and shins. At the top of the dark entry is a glass door leading into the lobby. Here may be seen the burly form of the messenger-in-chief, an elderly man with an easy smoking-cap and a pompous manner, who receives £200 a year for looking after the doors and presenting an official deportment to casual callers. Several of his subordinates may be seen about, one piling against the granite columns of the lobby the travelling-gear of a Queen's Messenger who is about to set off in five minutes' time for Cairo ; another opening the cases of an *attaché* just arrived from Japan ; while a third is examining a telegram brought post haste, and addressed to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. A glass door and handsome stone steps on the left-hand side give admittance from the quadrangle.

Proceeding beyond the lobby, waiting-

rooms reveal themselves to the right and messengers' rooms to the left. A staircase breaks the view half-way down the passage, and shows the road to the numerous offices on the floor above, and the printing-room on the basement. An avenue, branching off from the foot of the stairs, leads to the 'Giving-out Room,' whence blue-books and official communications are forwarded to the Press, and where the leading daily newspapers are carefully filed. A door beyond affords access to the library, with its magnificent collection of books on politics and foreign countries, its treasures of secret political information, and its historical archives stretching back to dim antiquity. Here, in a press, is the Secret Treaty of May 31, 1878, signed by the Marquis of Salisbury and ———, between the hours of two and three in the afternoon.\*

\* Many attempts have been made to discover the nature of this Secret Treaty, but none of the guesses have hit the mark. It consists only of a few lines, and contains a stipulation that it shall be kept secret by the two contracting Powers. There are private reasons, not affecting myself but others, why I should not disclose the Treaty. As soon as those reasons are removed I shall divulge it to the public. Or, I shall divulge it if

Everything at the F. O. revolves round the Library. It occupies the largest set of rooms in the office, and its treasures flood every corridor and garret. The correspondence of the different departments is yearly committed to its charge, to be properly registered and bound up in bulky volumes. At the end of twenty-five years, the volumes are handed over to the Record Office, and the secrets made accessible to the public.

The feature in the Library that interests me most is the Political Register, an institution without which diplomacy could scarcely exist nowadays. Every morning, the leading journals of the Metropolis are carefully scanned by a clerk, and the important items of news marked for reference in the Political Register. When this operation is finished, the papers are stowed away in presses, in company with the principal journals of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, and, at the end of the

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at any time the Government deny that the Secret Treaty of May 31, 1878, was written in the hours of one and two, by Messrs. March and Irving, in the Treaty Department, and afterwards signed by the Marquis of Salisbury and ——— the identical afternoon.

year, are bound up in volumes for future reference.

A short distance beyond the staircase we noted in the passage, is another, the Grand Staircase, with a door—the Grand Door—leading into the quadrangle just under the library windows. This entrance is mostly used by ambassadors. The Grand Staircase adjoining it is the pride of the office, and to one who has not seen better ones at Paris or St. Petersburg it is certainly a very handsome structure. Springing from the tessellated passage, opposite the bust of ‘old Pam,’ it rises gracefully right and left, and emerges through a row of polished columns upon the principal floor of the building. Walls of granite glisten upon you as you issue from the lower story, and overhead there is a lofty canopy of gold mosaic. At the top of the staircase is a broad, handsome passage, injured by insufficiency of light. On the left, it leads to the Secretary’s chambers, the Ambassadors’ waiting-rooms, and the State apartments; and, on the right, to the Consular, the Treaty, and other Departments. The ceiling of the passage is of imitation mosaic; the floor is



paved with coloured tiles, and one wall is fronted with presses containing books, the continuity being broken here and there by doors, through which may be seen Poodle or Fitznoodle poring over the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and wondering why on earth the public worries itself about matters which concern the Foreign Office alone. Towards the end of the passage, to the right, is a small avenue leading to an outer staircase; and a little farther on is another open space, forming a recess for five or six cases of books. Between the parallel divisions are two rooms. These are numbered respectively Thirty-Three and Thirty-Four, and, in their corporate capacity, constitute the Treaty Department.

Both of them are splendid office-rooms. Lofty walls, tinted a cool green, spring to the height of thirty feet, and are bounded by immense oaken presses. In Number 33 a gigantic window opens upon a balcony, whence there is a capital view of the quadrangle and the Barnacles at the India Office opposite, hard at work at their papers—I do not mean official documents, but newspapers. In the middle of the room are three writing-tables,



placed in a line. The one nearest the window, littered with papers and disordered foolscap, a whisky-flask and crumbs of arrowroot biscuits, drafts of projected treaties and confidential documents, belongs to the impetuous Hervin, for twenty years the prop and pride of the Library, and now the Deputy-Chief of the Treaty Department. Touching his table, and facing the fireplace, is a smaller and meaner table, with a box or two in front to shade the Discloser's eyes from the fire, a well-used writing-pad, a pile of Russian newspapers, half-a-dozen books from the Library on Central Asian affairs, and some confidential blue-books, State papers, and compilations dealing with Turkey and Russia. Nearer the door and the draughts, and separated from the Discloser's seat by a narrow gangway, is the desk of cautious MacFlartey, the third pillar of the Treaty Department, or, if you like, the Deputy-Assistant Superintendent. The peerages and reference-books on Extradition and Etiquette are disposed on his table with a scrupulous regard for neatness, and his carefully-arranged despatch-box presents a marked contrast to the untidy receptacle of

Hervin's. Facing MacFlartey's table is the register-desk and the door of the Superintendent's room; and, at the side, is the oaken press containing the Royal letters of the House of Hanover for a century. Behind the whole of the three tables is a huge press revealing stacks of printed treaties, pigeon-holes crammed with dusty despatches, piles of copies of letters of introduction to English ambassadors abroad, cases bursting with the correspondence of the Queen, mounds of medals, and rows of musty registers.

The adjoining chamber is devoted entirely to the Superintendent, Mr. Jemarch, who, in his cosy easy-chair, with his diplomatic nose, his diplomatic air, and his diplomatic tone, presents an edifying spectacle of English diplomacy enshrined in morocco leather. Over the black marble mantelpiece is a mirror, and sundry other luxuries denoting superiority of rank. Between the fireplace and the window is a library of some thousand volumes on Extradition. Imposing morocco leather chairs are disposed at the side of imposing oak presses, and facing the door of Thirty-Three is another door leading into the passage, and

enabling Jemarch to enter and leave the room without interrupting the labours of his subordinates.

Other chambers at the Foreign Office do not differ materially from those of the Treaty Department. Most of them, certainly, are better furnished, and not a few have sofas, ottomans, and other clerical necessities. Most of them, also, are much larger, have libraries of greater interest, and are furnished, in not a few instances, with curtains and pictures. In all of them, the current work is kept in the despatch-boxes on the table, and the reference papers of the department in the oaken presses. An instance of the high organization of the office is shown in connection with these despatch-boxes. One key fits all the presses in the office. A second, used by the Junior Clerks for their despatch boxes, fits the presses also, but fails to open the boxes of the Seniors. A third, kept by the Senior Clerks, opens all three. Finally, a fourth key—the Secretary's key—opens every despatch-box and press on the premises. An arrangement of this nature might be advantageously applied to other

public offices. It is wonderfully convenient. Wonderfully convenient, indeed.

In the morning, the office is given up to the housemaids and the messengers. Officially, the business of the place begins at twelve and closes at six ; but it is the tendency of mankind whenever it gets an inch to grasp an ell, and John Bull having, out of his great respect for the Downing Street Barnacles, conceded them the morning for their fashionable calls, what is more natural than that they should take the edge off the afternoon by staying away until one ? The majority never set their feet inside their rooms till past this hour, and Poodle thinks the country under an obligation to him if the pompous hall-keeper sees his eyeglass before two. The first hour is usually spent in opening the despatch-boxes, and in answering the private letters which have come by the morning post. By the time that this is over, the Barnacles are ready for lunch, and appetites, sharpened by the social calls of the morning, clamour successfully for the respectable chop or steak served up in the housekeeper's department, or the trim sandwich and sherry

brought by coquettish housemaids from the culinary regions below. After lunch, Poodle, to preserve his digestion, pays a constitutional visit to Fitznoodle, and confers with him over mutual engagements for the bat, the club, and the races. Poodle is musically inclined, and patronises the public at amateur concerts with feeble imitations of the 'darkies' in the streets. As he struts along the corridor, strumming on his banjo 'De gal dat lubbed dis nigger,' the Persian ambassador, who has taken the wrong turning at the top of the grand staircase, and has left a kick on the nose of the yelping terrier which the head of the Blank Department persists in bringing to the F. O., looks with an expression of wonder at the curious way Barnacles have of transacting foreign affairs. His astonishment is still further increased by Raybird, who impertinently imagines that nature has gifted him with a good voice, and takes advantage of the acoustic properties of his room (large enough to cage a dozen birds of his description, but used by him alone) to roar out the sonorous chorus of 'Nancy Lee.' These little symptoms of

'How we all do it' at the F. O., are heightened by a scene in Jagg's room, where a lively game of fisticuffs is going on between a couple of Juniors, and by another in the Minor Consular, where half-a-dozen Senior Clerks are conducting a raffle at the country's expense. The afternoon luncheon chat finished, a few drafts are knocked off for signature, and an hour's work is leisurely got through before the four o'clock tea comes up from the basement. Fitznoodle, who is anxious to see a Barnacle friend at the War Office, allows himself to be carried off by his umbrella, and is seen no more till closing-up time. Poodle languishes after Fitznoodle is gone, and lolling upon a luxurious couch, reads the fashionable news in the *Morning Post*, or dozes the rest of the afternoon over the political articles in the *Piccadilly Observer*. At half-past five, he arouses himself into the belief that he has done a very hard day's work; and after performing his toilette (the materials of which are provided at a grateful country's expense), he scowls at Big Ben booming six, and demands of Fitznoodle (who has called in at his club on his way back) what the devil Dizzy means by

appointing that 'fellah' from the army, Wellesley, Secretary to the Embassy at Vienna, when there are so many hard-working and ill-requited Clerks at the F. O. famishing on five hundred a year and prospects.

Of course there are industrious men at the Foreign Office, as there are in every walk of life, and some of these conscientiously earn the money which is quarterly paid them. But there are many Barnacles encrusted on the budget of the Foreign Office who are *not* honestly worth fivepence an hour, let alone five hundred a year; and I could point my finger at more than one greybeard who *thinks* he has done a hard day's work if he writes more than one routine despatch per diem, occupying half-an-hour, and who, if subjected to two hours' work for several days' together, fancies himself privileged to lie up in flannel the whole of the following week. Five hours' easy and agreeable toil ought not to be too much to expect from gentlemen who enjoy excellent salaries and abundant prospects. If it was absurd for the Foreign Office to employ a Writer to copy Cabinet secrets at tenpence an hour, it was, and is, still more absurd,

unjust, and intolerable, that persons with private incomes should be paid £700 or £800 a year simply to call at Downing Street every day, or every other day, to learn the latest news. One can excuse a Barnacle clinging to his £300 a year at Billingsgate, because it is mostly all he possesses, and to cut him adrift would be to ruin him. But there are few individuals at the F. O. who do not possess private fortunes of their own ; and for a gentleman, with £1,000 or £2,000 a year of his own, to draw £800 or £900 more out of the pocket of John Bull in these very hard times is inconsistent with upper-class conscientiousness. With all due deference to Downing Street, I myself believe that if the Foreign Office concern was farmed out to a City contractor, the whole business of the place might be done with one-third the staff, at one-sixth the cost, and Society would then, in all probability, be set free from the insufferable presence of Poodle, Fitznoodle, and other amiable but expensive members of the widely-diffused Barnacle family.

\* \* \* \* \*

A visitor to the Foreign Office, previous to



the signature of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, would have found the place much as I have described it, and the essential features still remain the same. The Discloser is gone, and possibly his table and chair, but the surroundings continue unaltered. It was a pleasant place, was the Treaty Department; always cool in summer, always warm in winter, and affording a writer all that a writer could desire.

Being a Tenpenny, I was bound to keep regular hours, and to arrive at the office precisely at half-past twelve. My hour of departure was half-past five or a quarter to six. When Parliament was up, and work was slack, my hours often ran from one till four or five, which, with sixty minutes taken out between-whiles for luncheon, cannot be considered to have been outrageous. Now and again there would be a spurt of work, keeping my nose to the foolscap for a day together; and, such is the perversity of Fate, that so surely as I was busy with my Press affairs, and desired to transact a deal on my own account at the F. O., a new treaty, or some other objectionable job, would come in with

a rush, and keep every moment of my five hours fully employed for a week. This defect was a perennial source of irritation, and ultimately led to my resolve to leave the Foreign Office.

Jemarch, as a rule, kept to his room, and Hervin, MacFlartey, and myself, formed a trio by ourselves. We were on familiar terms, we shared the same privileges, and it was rare that anything occurred to remind me that I was only a supernumerary writer. Perhaps this may have been partly owing to my discretion in not provoking them to display their authority, but it was also largely due to their courteous manner of conveying their commands to me. With Jemarch it was otherwise. He kept his brougham, and drove down to the F. O. every day from Cadogan Place ; and, as my pay was about as much as his coachman's, he possibly considered that there was no essential difference between us. I do not complain of this. I simply mention it as one of the circumstances that affected my position in Number 33.

It was early understood that if I had work to do the work should be promptly done, and

that if none existed I should be at liberty to follow my own pursuits. I was enabled by this arrangement to take my newspaper-work to London, and to do it undisguisedly at the office. The rich and excellent library at the F. O. supplied me with all the books I wanted, and when not copying a Queen's letter, or packing up shipwreck medals, I could bury myself behind the *Moscovski Vedomosti*, or collect data from secret and confidential documents. Sometimes, when I had been ten or twelve days in succession without a stroke of office-work, the question would force itself upon my Conscience why I was wanted at the F. O., but my Conscience always handed the matter over to Destiny, and Destiny left it to Time to determine.

The work of the Treaty Department was of a very varied and interesting character. In the first place, we had to deal with the receipt and distribution of medals. Foreign medals given to English subjects for saving life at sea always passed through Number 33, and the department likewise claimed jurisdiction over the vexatious and heart-burning questions arising from the regulations in force re-

specting foreign decorations. It would be interesting to know the number of proud hearts we troubled and mortified by means of those regulations. Men who, for skill or courage, had had decorations given them by foreign potentates, and who sadly wanted to wear them, were constantly applying to us for the requisite permission to pin them to their breast, and had abundant reasons to give to show how their particular case differed from everybody else's. Our system of deciding these knotty points consisted in turning up the printed regulations, and if these did not meet the case under inquiry, we hunted through the musty despatches until we found a precedent that did. We never started an original decision of our own, however unjust or unsuited the previous precedent might be, and in cases of extreme perplexity we always took refuge in the blessed security of negation. Some of the regulations were not understood by ourselves, and we frankly admitted to one another that they sadly needed revising. But there was no one at the Foreign Office to take the task in hand; and thus the Barnacles went on wounding

the spirits of the best and the bravest of our countrymen, just as they will continue to do until a reformer arises in Parliament and revises the regulations for them.

Shipwreck rewards stood on a different basis. A man like Colonel Baker, who had gained battles in the Balkans against our avowed enemy, would be curtly refused permission to accept and wear the Medjidieh; while Jack Styles, of Dungeness, who had helped to haul a sailor ashore from a wreck, would be assisted in every way in getting a silver medal. The machinery of distribution was easy to keep in order, although a trifle elaborate. If any of our sailors or littoral folk displayed gallantry in saving the lives of foreign seamen, the diplomatic representative of the latter, in course of time, would forward us from His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs a number of medals, a binocular glass or two, donations of money, or some pieces of electro-plate. MacFlartey or Hervin would then write out a draft informing the Board of Trade of the circumstance, and this I would copy for signature by one of the Under-Secretaries of State. Enclosed in the despatch to Whitehall would

be also sent a copy of the ambassador's letter, and; as diplomatic communications mostly reached us in a French or German form, they helped, in a measure, to swell my income.

On our part, the donation of a medal to a foreign subject would involve greater correspondence. In most instances, the deed of gallantry would be notified to us by a consul, whose despatch I would have to copy and send on, with a letter, for 'the consideration of' the Commissioners of the Board of Trade. In reply, the Board of Trade would inform us of the nature of the reward to be given. If a medal, we would write to the Master of the Mint, ordering him to prepare and engrave one for us. In the course of a month or two, the decoration would arrive, accompanied by a bill. The latter we would forward, with a despatch, to the Board of Trade, and the former, with the conventional laudatory letter, we would send to our ambassador abroad to be given to the Government of the recipient. After an extended period, our ambassador would forward us the receipt which he had received from the medallist through half-a-dozen steps of functionaries,

culminating with the Minister of the Exterior, and this we passed on to the Board of Trade, whence the matter rolled on to the Treasury, and finally into the annual budget. It often fell to my lot to take the foreign medals out of the cases to see that they were in proper order, and it was interesting to compare the designs on the different coins. Ours were very solid and substantial, but many others surpassed them in artistic merit.

Another branch of our business was to confer commissions, 'other than consular,' to notify elevations to knighthood, and to decide questions of ceremonial or precedence. This was very advantageous to me, as I was mostly made aware of diplomatic appointments and promotions before they were known to the Press. But it had one very serious drawback. It let me into the trade secret as to how laudatory letters are written to distinguished men on receiving decorations from the Government. For instance. The customary sheet of note-paper would come into Thirty-Three with the words, 'Her Majesty has been graciously pleased, on the recommendation of the Earl of Beaconsfield,' or somebody else,

‘to appoint Henry Austin Layard a G.C.B.’ MacFlartey would then look up the last precedent, and a stereotyped letter would be written thanking him in sonorous adjectives for his eminent services ; and if the individual in question did not happen to be up to the tricks of the Barnacles, he would probably run away with the notion that the despatch had been concocted expressly on his own account, instead of being a mere form composed by a clerk, Heaven knows when, and used for every G.C.B. ever since.

It was always a busy time when the Queen sent a Garter Mission abroad, much of the clerical drudgery falling to the Treaty Department. In other sections of the F. O. such missions provoked the liveliest excitement, as they involved appointments to the suite, elevations to diplomatic dignity, and possible presents and decorations from the grateful recipient of the Garter. A Garter Mission costs the Queen, or rather the country, between £5,000 and £10,000. Of this sum, a by no means inconsiderable share finds its way into the pockets of the Barnacles at the F. O.

Sign-Manual Instructions were also a



weighty piece of work. When a functionary is elevated to the rank of a Minister or Ambassador, he receives from his Sovereign a set of instructions occupying some sixty pages of foolscap, and superscribed with the royal and imperial autograph. These instructions could just as well be printed as written by hand, but this economy of labour would not do for Downing Street, which loves to crack nuts with steam-hammers, and accordingly they increase the work of the Writer's seat in the Treaty Department. Accompanying the sign-manual instructions were usually 'Full Powers,' the elaboration of which also fell to my share. In both cases, the drafts were kept in a printed form, so that the clerks had only to fill in the names. The 'Full-Power' draft I had to copy out on a sheet of parchment the size of a page of the *Times*, leaving a broad space at the top for the signature of the Queen, and another at the bottom for affixing the Great Seal. On its return with the Queen's name, three holes had to be punched in a triangular manner at the bottom, and silver cord passed through and finished off with tassels. Then a despatch

had to be addressed to the Lord Chancellor instructing him to affix the Great Seal, to enclose which appendage, we added a silver box the size and shape of a muffin. In a few days' time, the 'Full Power' returned with the silver cords embedded in a cake of wax (looking very much like a cake of fancy soap), and then the person on whom the unlimited authority had been conferred was in a position to sign away Kars and Batoum, and to otherwise play old gooseberry with the honour of the country. It fell to my share to confer full powers on the Earl of Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury, Lord Odo Russell, and several other diplomats. In the press at the back of my table we had a number of deceased Full Powers—Clarendon's, Russell's, and Granville's—which their former owners had not valued sufficiently to store away among their archives.

Every year, we had to send round circulars to the ambassadors, inviting them to effect a census of their establishments, so as to prevent the members from being mulcted for rates and taxes. All changes in the diplomatic body had also to be notified to us, and

in return we issued invitations to Levées, undertook presentations to the Queen, and gave the official machinery a shove (the Lord Chancellor gave it another) when the Court had to go into mourning. Closely allied to this ceremonial work was the responsible duty of writing Her Majesty's letters. In my capacity of hack at the Treaty Department I could claim for myself the unique distinction of being Copyist to the Queen !

It is a well-known fact that the trousers sold to the nobility at the West-End are often made at Whitechapel for something less than a shilling a pair, and that the price paid to sewing-machine girls for stitching shirts barely pays for the cotton, but it will be new to many people to learn that Her Majesty's Letters are written at the rate of Tenpence an Hour ; or, counting four letters to the hour, at the rate of twopence halfpenny per Royal and Imperial letter.

As this beats the Civil Service Stores, I had better narrate the procedure.

On the arrival at the F. O. of a letter from a Royal personage abroad, announcing the birth, marriage, or death of a prince or



princess, we would send it in a despatch-box to the Queen. In the course of a few days, the box returned, with the letter opened and presumably read. Mac or Hervin then sought out the last precedent, and prepared the draft of the answer. Mac was so used to penning these stereotyped letters that he mostly composed them from memory. The draft was afterwards handed over to me, and I had to copy it on old letter paper, beginning at the top line in the corner, and running on to the opposite side of the page. For Kings and Queens and Emperors, and smaller German fry, the form ran something like this :

‘ Victoria, by the Grace of God, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India, &c., &c., &c., to Her Good Brother, the Emperor of Russia, Sendeth Greeting ! We have received Your letter of the 19th instant, in which You inform Us of the birth of . . . . . We thank You for this communication. . . . . And so We recommend You to the Protection of the Almighty.

Given at Our Court at Windsor, the 5th day of March, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy-eight, and in the forty-fourth year of Our reign.

‘Your good sister,

‘VICTORIA R. and I.

‘To Our good brother, His Imperial

Majesty the Emperor of all the

Russias.’

In the case of a Republic, we used common foolscap, and the formula ran :

‘Victoria, by the Grace, &c., &c., &c., to the President of the Republic of the United States of America, Sendeth Greeting. Our Good Friend ! We have received Your letter of the 5th ultimo notifying Your elevation to the Sovereign Power, &c., &c., &c. . . . And so We recommend You to the Protection of the Almighty, &c., &c., &c.

‘(Signed) ‘Your Good Friend,

‘VICTORIA R. and I.’

The little Republics of America were a pest to the office. They were always electing fresh Presidents. In Europe, Germany

caused us the most trouble, and the relationship of Her Majesty to the innumerable sovereigns of Das Vaterland necessitated an accurate knowledge of the connection between the reigning houses. Some of these sovereigns the Queen would address as her 'dear sister, cousin, aunt,' and several other anomalous titles placed in a string. I should like to have dwelt more fully on the work connected with these Royal letters, but my book of jottings got unfortunately burnt in the conflagration that took place in my lodgings last June, on the receipt of the information that my rooms were to be searched, and my papers confiscated by the Government.

When the letter was finished, and carefully touched up to make it look neat and pretty, I wrote in pencil at the end 'Your Good Brother,' or 'Sister,' 'Victoria R. and I.' (all sovereigns in Europe are brothers or sisters), and placing an oblong piece of blotting-paper across the document, locked it up in a despatch box and sent it off to the Queen. On its return with the Queen's autograph appended, the pencil-mark was rubbed out, the sheet folded and placed in a square

envelope of very unpretentious appearance, and the letter addressed to 'Our Good Brother,' or 'Sister,' the Sovereign in question. Afterwards, it was sealed with the Queen's seal, and sent off with a covering letter to the English representative abroad. The Queen's seal was a common little iron seal that inspired no respect or reverence except when the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 'went out' of office. It then had to be carefully dusted and sent to Her Majesty, to be handed over to the Foreign Secretary's successor, in company with other seals of mysterious importance. As regards the blotting-paper, a fresh slip was always sent with every document despatched to Her Majesty to sign. I have heard it stated, on apparently good authority, that the Queen uses twenty-five thousand such slips every year. The blotting-paper issued to us for this purpose was in a doubled oblong form, and if Hervin sent off a document to be signed, the Queen got the full quantity. MacFlartey, however, was economical, and always tore the slips into single sheets. On their return they fell to our share

as perquisites, and I have still a pile of them with the distinct impression of Her Majesty's handwriting, chiefly remarkable, in my opinion, for the vigour thrown into the Imperial affix, 'I.'

The letters addressed to the Queen by the Swiss Confederation were the best as regards penmanship, and those from the United States the worst. The letters, and the despatches also, from Washington, were always coarsely written on inferior paper, and were remarkable for their clumsy composition. The Russian letters were large, and the seal imposing and conspicuous, but the slovenly clerks rarely rubbed out the pencil-marks, and the envelopes came to England with the blacklead lines still fresh upon them that the Barnacle had used to keep his writing straight. The aspiring character of Italy was shown in the excellence of the paper, the boldness of the handwriting, and the grandeur of the seal. From Persia the letters usually arrived perforated by the quarantine authorities. In common with all Oriental epistles, they were very pretty.

The Royal letters addressed to the Queen,



and the drafts of the answers, were placed in a box, and, at the end of the year, were bound up into a volume. In our department, we had charge of the Royal correspondence as far back as the first of the Georges, and the volumes contained letters from every sovereign who had maintained intercourse with England during that period. The collection was worth thousands of pounds, so far as autographs were concerned, but in all other respects it was simply an accumulation of rubbish.

Respecting the employment of the R. and I. in the Queen's signature, a curious contest once arose in the Treaty Department, of which the Discloser was witness.

A document had been sent down to Osborne for signature, and had returned with 'Victoria R. and I.' instead of the regulation 'Victoria R.' Mac was a perfect encyclopædia in all matters appertaining to ceremonial and etiquette, and his quick eye speedily discovered that her Majesty had subscribed herself 'Queen and Empress' when by rights she should have only signed herself 'Queen.' Possibly Hervin, in despatching

the document to Her Majesty, may have added the 'I.' final by mistake. I myself incline to this view. But the impression was general in the Department that the Queen, who is said to be very proud of her Imperial title (and why shouldn't she be?), had wilfully appended the tailpiece herself. Mac was among those who thought so, and he pointed out the error to the Superintendent, adding, that the Queen had infringed the law regulating the use of the Imperial title, and suggesting, that a memorandum should be addressed to Her Majesty on the subject.

Jemarch did not regard the infraction in this alarmist light. In the easy, familiar style peculiar to the Barnacles at the F. O., he observed that, 'If the old lady wished to sign herself "R. and I.," why shouldn't she?'

Mac would not agree to this. Society would go to the dogs if matters were treated from this happy-go-lucky standpoint. The use of the R. and I. had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished. He quoted several precedents, showing how previous irregularities had been brought to the knowledge of Her Majesty by means of a memo-

randum, and how Her Majesty had always conformed to the instructions placed, in this manner, before her. A very grave breach of Constitutional law had been perpetrated by the Queen signing herself Empress in a document in which, by rights, the Imperial title should have been omitted ; and, as this was not the first case of the kind, he thought Her Majesty should be apprised of her irregularity.

Jemarch, however, refused to trouble himself in the affair, and there the controversy apparently ended.

I believe I have before observed that MacFlartey was remarkable for his love of order and exactitude. His was such a scrupulous nature that, if he had represented England at the Berlin Congress, he would not have allowed a single signature to be appended to the document by his brother diplomats until, with his own eyes and eyeglass, he had assured himself that not an *i* remained undotted, not a *t* uncrossed, and not a sentence without its proper complement of colons, semicolons, and commas. It grieved him, consequently, to see the matter treated

in such a spirit of levity ; and when the next document was sent to the Queen belonging to the category of the R.'s, he wrote out the signature in a clear, unmistakable manner, and so close to the edge of the paper that Her Majesty could not possibly append the 'I' without betraying her determination of breaking down the Constitutional safeguard. Mac succeeded. The document came back signed simply 'Victoria R.' A dangerous precedent was disestablished. The Constitution was saved !

\* \* \* \* \*

The work of copying despatches fell to my share. Often a big batch would come in, taking up my time for days, but latterly the F. O. got into the habit of printing long documents. The extradition business of the department caused a deal of despatch-writing to ambassadors abroad. These were mostly signed by the Secretary of State. Derby's signature was remarkably big, bold, and distinct, and presented a strong contrast to the contemptible little scribble of Salisbury. Neither of these two statesmen exercised that vigilant scrutiny over de-

spatches which was peculiar to Palmerston. In his time, woe betide the clerk who indulged in bad grammar or forgot to insert his stops. The schoolmaster was abroad in those days, and speedily the delinquent received from old Pam the sarcastic message that, 'he had better order in a fresh supply of commas from the Stationery Department,' or 'purchase a second-hand Murray.'

While referring to Palmerston, I should also observe that both Derby and Salisbury failed to manifest that grasp over foreign affairs which was the glory of their great predecessor. Pam knew everything that was going on in the place, and kept an eye on every detail. He could truly say, '*Le Foreign Office: c'est moi.*' He sat on the saddle of Foreign Affairs like a true horseman, horse and man in unison, while Derby was like a ploughboy on a colt. Whatever may have been the effect of his policy outside the F. O., his mind certainly left no impress on the work within it. I say this with regret, as before I went to Downing Street I had the highest faith in his capacity for controlling men and things. When he retired

from the Cabinet, it was expected that imperious Salisbury would act the part of Pam the Second, and great was the trepidation of the favourites of the vacillating *régime* of Derby when the new broom crossed the Quadrangle from the India Office, and swept into the world his famous First of April Circular. But, to the surprise of every Barnacle in the place, his grip was found to be as loose as Derby's; and I am not sure but that the Office would have jogged along, driven by Precedent, just as well without the Foreign Secretary, as with him. It was a proverbial remark in Derby's day, in regard to scamped despatches, 'Oh, he'll pass anything.' The cry was still the same as regards Salisbury when I left the office in June.

The treaties constituted the least agreeable work of the Department, and when the long and prosy negotiations for a fresh one resulted in the order to prepare the document for signature, the job would mostly sweep away my leisure moments for a week. The draft was invariably printed, thus saving the clerks their work, and from it I wrote out the treaty on large white paper, folio size, with a gilt-edge;

placing the paragraphs in parallel columns, the English on one side and the foreign equivalent on the other. Two copies were always made, one for England to keep, and the other to be presented to the second signatory power. In the case of the Secret Treaty of May 31, 1878, Mr. Jemarch made one copy, Mr. Hervin the other. When I had finished the copies, MacFlartey sewed the sheets together with blue ribbon, and sealed down the ends below the vacant space for the signature. Afterwards Jemarch and the Secretary of the Foreign Embassy examined them a second time, and affixed the seals ; and then the ambassador called at the office, and signed them.

In the case of a ratification, the treaty had to be written out on fancy-bordered parchment, demy folio size. The sheets were bound in a gorgeous red velvet cover, and after being signed by the Sovereign, the Great Seal was affixed, after the manner of a Full Power. Considerable care had to be taken in writing out the treaties to keep them free from blunders, erasures being inadmissible except in special instances, when there

was no time available to make a fresh copy. It was also necessary, as far as possible, to keep the English and foreign paragraphs side by side, and for this purpose a knowledge of French and German was indispensable. During my short career at the F. O. I wrote out treaties in French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, and Portuguese. On one occasion, I translated a French convention into English, and my version was printed and presented to Parliament. For this I received extra, sixpence three farthings !

Over and above the regulation tenpence an hour, I received fourpence halfpenny per folio extra for any copying I chanced to do in foreign languages. When I first arrived at the F. O. I was at a loss to know how to calculate these folios, and finding I could not gain enlightenment in the Treaty Department, I took a walk over to Cannon Row.

In the Writer's Register-Room I found the head clerk watching three Writers doing his work for him. I told him I 'wanted to know' whether a sheet of note-paper, a sheet of foolscap, and a sheet of treaty-paper, all went into the category of 'folio'; and,



furthermore, whether the Commissioners did not allow more for copying German and Russian than for fourpenny-halfpenny French.

‘I cannot inform you,’ he said, when I had finished my questions.

‘But this is the room to which I have to send the form I fill in, and it is here where the form is checked, and my money paid; and surely, therefore, the information should be accessible here.’

‘That’s all correct, but we cannot answer your inquiries.’

‘Then, how am I to find out?’

‘You must ask your superiors at the Foreign Office to address a communication to the Commissioners at Cannon Row, and the Commissioners, having obtained the information from this department, will forward it to the Foreign Office.’

‘But my questions are so simple, that surely you could answer me without all this circumlocution?’

‘No, we cannot. You come without any official *status*.’

‘But you know who I am. You only sent

me to the Treaty Department yourself a few days ago.'

'I know that, but I cannot answer your questions. You had better give your superiors the reply I have already given you.'

Finding it impossible to drive an idea into the skull of this obstinate tape-worm, I took my departure in disgust. He belonged to a class of men found in every country and in every age—men who render authority hateful to humanity. It is such men as he who send green coffee to the Crimea—who despatch troops from Quettah without their great-coats, in spite of the frost, because the regulation-time for wearing them is not yet arrived—who make soldiers shave and pipe-clay five minutes before going into action—who render our Local administration as monstrous as the Imperial administration of Russia—who make our workhouses hateful dens—who drag upon progress, resist reform, mistake all the nonsense and rubbish of government for government itself—and who always take refuge in negation. Peter the Great had a short and summary way of dealing with such

Barnacles. He either laid his stick across their backs, or knocked their heads off. Humanity could do with half-a-dozen peripatetic Peter the Greats. She could forgive them an occasional blunder, if they cleared the world of its blockheads.

A few days later, this obnoxious Barnacle went over to the F. O. to give instructions to the Treaty Department respecting the calculation of folios, but he was received with unexpected hauteur, and, to use Roger Bacon's expression, was sent away 'with a flea in his ear,' in less than a minute.

I then took upon myself to fill in the forms in my own manner. Any writing, from four lines to forty, that I copied on a page, or part of a page, was calculated as a folio. Sometimes, I had thirty or forty folios at the end of the week to set down in my voucher—more often, I had none at all. I soon found, from the money I received, that no difference whatever was made between one language and another, and that they were all gauged at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d—why, in the name of goodness, the odd halfpenny?—per folio of 'correct and approved copying.'

After a while a fresh query arose. I was employed the whole of an afternoon in reading aloud to MacFlartey a series of French and Spanish reports. I think I went through nearly seventy foolscap pages, and, at the end, with a husky voice, I asked the Department what I should receive for my labour. The Department did not know. It was a question, indeed, whether the Treasury granted any remuneration for reading a foreign language, although they allowed 4½d. for the easier task of writing it. I did not take the trouble of solving that knotty point. I should have wasted my time for months if I had raised the question among the Barnacles at the Treasury. I therefore established a regulation myself. I decreed that two folios of foreign print, read aloud, should be equal to one folio of foreign 'copying,' and I charged the Office at this rate until I left the Service. The aggregate of these extras was about £10 per annum.

In the payment of my salary a needless ignominy was inflicted upon my pride. I was the sole Writer at the Foreign Office, and if I had been paid quarterly with the rest of the

staff by the Chief Clerk, I should have had little to remind me that I was only a Tenpenny. But whatever fancies I might gather round my position to hide from my vanity that I was acting as a drudge in the Barnacle Service, I had to cast them off on Monday afternoon, when, with the common herd, I had to scramble for my pay at Cannon Row, and to sign for my 30s. in the presence of a crowd of shabby-genteel and residuum writers. To hear my name called out in connection with such a crew was humiliation. It irritated my self-respect.

But, to the philosophic mind, drawbacks in life are only advantages in disguise. After receiving my money, I used to take half-an-hour's walk along the Embankment, or attend vespers at Westminster Abbey, or look in at the Aquarium, and these little breaks in the monotony of the day were to me a source of perennial pleasure. Monday, from being a day of humiliation, was converted into a day of enjoyment.

The scale of salaries in the Treaty Department was as follows :

Jemarch . £800, rising £25 to £1,000.

Hervin . £610, rising £20 to £650.

MacFlartey. £330 „ £15 to £360.

Together with two months' holiday ; unlimited sick-leave ; unbounded possibilities of promotion ; large retiring pension.

Smith, the Treaty messenger, £150 ; besides a month's holiday, sick-leave and pension.

Marvin, £78 ; French, etc., £10 = £88. Twelve days' holiday ; fourteen days' sick-leave at three-quarter pay ; no promotion ; no pension.

Parliament yearly votes £260 towards 'copying' at the F. O. I was the only copyist there ; and the only copyist received £88. What became of the remaining £112 ?

Hervin, MacFlartey, and myself did almost identical work as regards the *nature* of our duties, although, in respect to the *volume*, mine was more than both of theirs put together. Yet, collectively, they enjoyed ten times my salary.

I liked my place hugely for a while. Mac was away on his annual two months' leave when I arrived, and shortly after his return, Hervin went away to the seaside for a similar period. Up to Christmas, and for

a few weeks afterwards, the situation answered my purpose excellently. I could work at home from seven o'clock till midday, and on my arrival at Downing Street I could mostly continue my writing until I went out to dinner at two. I always took an hour for that meal, and often an hour and a half.

This abundance of leisure enabled me to enjoy an after-dinner stroll in the Park in the summer, and to cultivate my artistic taste in the National Gallery in the winter. If not always profitably, my dinner-hours were at least very pleasantly spent. On returning to Downing Street, I would find the day's work put upon my table, and if this occupied me more than an hour, I considered the business that day exceedingly heavy. Mostly, I could count on having another hour to myself between four and six, and then, on returning home, I could again continue my writing from seven till midnight. I used to look upon the F. O. as a place of relaxation and rest; and, notwithstanding that the feeling changed towards the last, I still continue to regard the office as a species of select and aristocratic News-Room.

To relieve my mind of the monotony of my press work dealing with the War, I wrote at the F. O. a work on Linguistry,\* and began to compile from the archives of the Library a volume on the 'English in Russia.' It is regrettable that my resignation prevented my finishing the latter.

After Hervin came back in January, the work, which had accumulated during his absence, flooded the department and swept my leisure away. French treaties had to be ratified, extradition drafts to be prepared, sign-manual instructions to be written out; and, to make bad worse, all the world abroad took to dying, or marrying, or giving birth to princes or princesses. Then came the fever-time at the F. O., when Russia was violently hated, and war with the Czar looked upon as a settled certainty.

It was while the yoke was still irritating me in its freshness that a painful disillusion took place. All along, the impression had existed on my mind that my appointment had been due to the exertions of Sedley, who had once casually promised to write to Can-

\* 'Linguistry: or, How to talk Languages.' Will shortly appear.



non Row, to suggest, on the score of my linguistic knowledge, that I should be removed from Tuttle's Branch to the 'Forrin Awfis.' This confidence I felt bound to respect, and I rigorously abstained from using any of the information that passed through my fingers. That the temptation was not easy to overcome, I can well admit as regards the first half of my stay at the F. O. Towards the end, however, my success outside the office placed me above the desire of gain. In the very first hour of my installation at No. 33, a despatch was given me to copy, the contents of which were worth at least a guinea.

The Disillusion took place thus :

I had been chatting with MacFlartey about the Civil Service, and in the course of conversation I incidentally put to him the question as to how it happened that I had been chosen for the vacant seat in the Treaty Department? Why it was that the only writer-ship at the Foreign Office had been conferred upon me—mentally adding—a journalist?

'Well, your predecessor was going away, so I went across to the Civil Service Commission, and there I saw the Secretary. I told

him we did not want any ordinary writer—a mere penman and nothing else—but some one who knew languages and was a gentleman. I was taken to the Register-Room, and there I looked through a lot of papers till I came to yours. Then I picked you out.'

'You saw all my papers?'

'Yes, the examination ones as well.'

An easterly wind was blowing that afternoon, and this, with a touch of indigestion (I had not then become acquainted with the miraculous virtues of the *Eucalyptus Dyspepsia Pad*), made me inclined to view things through rather a gloomy medium. Even the strongest belief in Destiny, you know, is not proof against dyspepsia. I compared my £90 a year with the £150 which the messenger, who waited upon me, was receiving, and I was indignant that 'some one who knew languages and was a gentleman' should be valued at half the pay of a flunkey, and that, at the F. O., the broom and the duster should be held in higher esteem than the tongue and the brain.

I was so disgusted with the F. O. for 'sucking' the best years from my life for the miserable sum of £90, that I resolved from that moment to place upon the market every piece of information that chance threw into my way. I made a reservation only when I was asked to maintain silence, as in the case of the Somali Coast Treaty, or when I saw that a disclosure would be attended with evil results. Thus. When the Grand Duke Sergius was struck dead by a spent bullet at the rear of the Russian army on a battle-field in the Balkans, the Czar informed Her Majesty of the melancholy circumstance in a letter of unusual sadness. The duty fell to MacFlartey to prepare the letter of condolence, and as it was a debatable question what view the Queen took of the occurrence, a discussion arose as to the language to be employed in reply. In the end, in despair of discovering a precedent, he wrote out the customary letter of condolence, altering an adjective or two, and raising the tone of sympathy about ten degrees above the usual level. When the draft returned from the palace, it was found that the Queen, with her

own hand, had effected alterations in the adjectives which reduced the sympathy to quite thirty degrees below the standard, and made the letter significantly frigid. Here, you will see, was a very pretty piece of news for a paragraph in those exciting times. The war-fever over, there can be no harm in my mentioning the incident now as an illustration of what might have been disclosed had I been inclined to do so.

I also did not go out of my way to pick up news. It will occur to most Barnacles at the F. O., that, if I had chosen to have availed myself of their good-nature, and had thrust myself upon their departments, or had made a practice of visiting the printer's-room, I could easily have picked up in an hour sufficient news to stock my papers for a week. But I was bound to consider my future reputation, and I had no desire to be regarded as a spy. Even though I never went about the office except when despatched on business by Mr. Jemarch, I did not escape suspicion, and the Marquis of Salisbury had me arrested, not because he imagined me to be a kleptomaniac in the matter of state-

papers, but because he believed me to be a spy in the pay of Count Schouvalóff.

Looking back at the ruthless feeling displayed by the F. O. after the discovery that I had disclosed the Secret Memorandum, I have sometimes regretted that I did not avail myself more fully of the opportunities thrust violently in my way. The very careless manner in which printed confidential documents were treated was such, that on one occasion, when the Austrian Alliance was the question of the hour, it was permitted to my vision to see a paper, 'printed only for the use of the Cabinet,' in which the policy of Count Andrassy was discussed in terms that would have produced a profound emotion had I disclosed it.

Equally important, and far more valuable, was a printed periodical summary of our relations with foreign powers. It was got up in a neat paragraphic form, and was worth from £5 to £25 per foolscap page. I am amazed now that I never made use of these summaries. The news could have been put in circulation without causing any suspicion at the F. O.

Of late years, a custom has grown up in

Downing Street of printing all important news received from our representatives abroad. During the war, telegrams were incessantly being received from the European capitals, and, in the printing-room, it was possible to learn a deal of intelligence before it reached the papers. I believe that the system, which is as convenient as it is dangerous, came into vogue with the development of Her Majesty's taste for foreign affairs. Every piece of important news received at the F. O. is either telegraphed to the Queen, or is conveyed to her place of residence in a printed form by a Queen's Messenger. This arrangement may be useful in serving certain purposes, but it undoubtedly leads to diplomatic secrets being confided to a larger circle than is consistent with absolute immunity from disclosure.

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I was the only Writer at the F. O. The only writer was a Journalist.

This anomaly was a source of exquisite pleasure to me for a while. It was such a good joke that I had not the heart to destroy it. It was a better tonic to me in my dull

moments than 'Les Cloches de Corneville,' or a page of 'Pickwick Papers.'

A very powerful reason operated to prevent my disclosing my joint connection with the Press and the Foreign Office. I was ashamed to tell the Barnacles that a member of the Press, at which they frequently jeered, should be serving them as a Tenpenny ; and, at the same time, I was ashamed to disclose to the newspapers to which I belonged, except one or two, that I eked out my income by acting as a paltry Civil Service Writer. Thus, the Press did not know that I belonged to the F. O., and the F. O. did not know that I belonged to the Press.

The joke was rendered all the more delicious by the fact that MacFlartey imagined that he had a tremendous insight into other people's characters, and that he could tell all about a man—and more—at a glance.

One occasion rises very vividly to my memory. MacFlartey had been spending some spare moments during the afternoon in expressing the opinion which Barnacles at the F. O. entertain regarding the Press.

These, as may be imagined, were not very flattering. Nor is it conceivable that they should be so. Most of the clerks in Downing Street have access to the current secret negotiations, and often know more about the progress of affairs than a Cabinet Minister himself. To them, therefore, the sight must necessarily seem ridiculous of newspapers groping about in the dark after the policy of the hour, and giving vent to utterances and prognostications which they themselves know to be erroneous and absurd. The diatribe he had finished by calling me over to his table to teach me—to teach *me*—how to correct a proof, in which art he considered himself an adept.

This so acted upon my feelings, that later on, after he left the room, I gave way to a paroxysm of laughter, and the fit was still strong upon me when someone approached the door.

I converted my convulsions into a cough, and looked towards the handle. A short stout man, not over-particularly well-dressed in black, and looking very much like a messenger, entered the room. Mac and I had been engaged the last half-hour finishing



the Somali Coast Treaty, copies of which, nearly ready for despatch to Cairo, lay upon our respective tables.

‘Where’s Mr. MacFlartey?’ inquired the visitor.

‘Downstairs, making arrangement for the despatch of something special to Mr. Vivian to-night.’

‘Has he finished the Somali Coast Treaty, do you know?’ advancing towards MacFlartey’s despatch-box, and looking over it towards MacFlartey’s pad.

‘Not quite,’ I said, quitting my chair. ‘My copy is ready, but the one for the Khedive contains a technical point which Mr. MacFlartey is now inquiring about.’

The short stout man took up Mac’s copy, and I pointed out the point under discussion. He then went away, receiving my assurances that both documents would be ready by seven o’clock.

A few minutes later, MacFlartey returned.

‘Somebody has been for you,’ I said. ‘A messenger, I believe. He was very free with your papers, and examined your Somali Coast Treaty as though he knew all about it.’

‘I dare say he did,’ rejoined the Junior Protocolist, with a smile. ‘I met him in the passage. He was Lord Tenterden.’

This was the only occasion that I saw the Head of the Foreign Office inside the Treaty Department. Minor officials were always dropping in upon us. Foreign secretaries of embassies, ambassadors themselves, ministers and attachés, were continually entering Jemarch’s room, but the Chief of the F. O. kept away from it. Now and again, we would have consuls and attachés fresh from abroad, always with abundance of diplomatic gossip, and always a source of interest to the Discloser. As their ears may tingle respecting what they said in the Treaty Department, I may as well assure them that on no occasion did I chronicle for the Press the small beer they were so profuse of in the office. I did not even jot down their chit-chat in my diary, or it might have made a historic volume twenty years hence. The only information I disclosed to the Press was that contained in the work given to me to operate upon ; and from the time that Mac-Flartey disillusionized me, to the day of the

Anglo-Russian Agreement, a period of about six months, I do not believe I made in this manner more than five or six guineas.!

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Among the daily visitors at the F. O., who caused me interest and curiosity, was Count Peter Alexandrovitch Schouvalóff, Ex-chief of the Gendarmerie to the Emperor of Russia. Before my installation in No. 33, I had only seen him once, but that occasion had left a vivid impression on my mind.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning at St. Petersburg, and I had just entered the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul, when Count Schouvalóff dashed past me in a sledge. The sky was gloriously blue, such as is never seen in London; the snow was melting around me with a soothing murmur, and the sun gilded with its brightest and freshest rays the white housetops inside the fortress.

The warm southerly wind tempted me to throw off my furs, and there was a feeling (which only one who has not seen a blade of grass or green leaf for five months can appreciate) that the gloomy days of winter were over, and that, henceforth, there would

be only sunshine, and beauty, and gladness. In the midst of this joyous reverie, the carillons of the fortress cathedral struck up 'Boje Tsaria Khranee,'\* and Count Schouvalóff entered the building.

At that time, the dungeons inside the Fortress contained sixty Nihilists of the Tchikovski confederation. Some of the conspirators had been in their cells a twelve-month, and some even two years, without being put on their trial, or being allowed to communicate in any way with their sorrowing friends. Several of them, in their despair, had hanged themselves to the bars of their cells. Others, fiercer in temperament, had demanded of the police functionaries that they should be publicly examined, maintaining earnestly their innocence of any treasonable designs against the Czar. They had been flogged.

The Director of the Department in Russia, who was responsible for these things, and through whose agency any person might be seized, imprisoned for life without trial, immured in the mines of Siberia, banished

\* The Russian National Anthem.

to keep guard on the confines of Bokhara, starved to death in the political gaols, or killed by the slower process of incarceration in the pestilential cells of island fortresses, was Count Peter Schouvalóff, the 'dear friend' of the Marquis of Salisbury. It was he who had brought to perfection the gendarmerie system that still gags Russia so tightly, that the public spirit can only make itself felt through the arm of the assassin.

To divert the people's attention from the licentiousness, extravagance, and tyranny of the Court, he had deliberately chosen debauchery as the prop of autocracy. By his orders, the establishment of luxurious night-houses had been promoted, the *can-can* encouraged, and every form of vice assisted to develop itself that might dwarf the mind and stunt the reason of rising Russia. It was he, who, more than any of his predecessors, had discouraged enlightenment, had punished eminent men for daring to be liberal in their views, and had consigned hundreds of innocent untried persons to exile in Siberia.

The Czar had vested him with such ex-

treme power, that he had only to sound a gong in his office, and he could order the first man passing his chancellerie to be seized and sent without trial to Kamtschatka. He could tear men from their homes at midnight, and make away with their freedom in such a manner that their wives and families would never know what had become of them. And what is more, Count Schouvalóff had done this—had done this repeatedly.

To be standing free and unfettered inside the Petropavlovsky Fortress, with all the joyous signs of spring about me, and to think of the poor unhappy wretches rotting in the underground cells, while above them the decorated Shadow of the Czar sang *Te Deums* in the Fortress Cathedral, was heart-breaking. I could not bear it. I hurried away from the accursed Bastille. But I often thought of that Sunday morning while watching the arrival of Count Schouvalóff at the Foreign Office, and the feeling I entertained towards him was such that, had no other motives inspired the disclosure of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, my hatred of him would have impelled me to the deed.

Hervin was the one who called my attention to the daily visits of the ex-Inquisitor of Russia. I went along the passage, and from behind the granite columns watched the ambassador ascend the broad Grand Staircase. There was the same handsome figure, the fine head prematurely grey, the same persuasive fascinating address. No wonder that, with these advantages, and years of training as Detective in Chief in Russia, the Artful Dodger of modern diplomacy should have so entwined himself round the guileless heart of Lord Derby as to make him play the part of Simple Oliver of Downing Street. No wonder that when he came in contact with suspicious Salisbury—the Noah Claypole of the Berlin negotiations—the wily envoy should have made him cast aside his hostile 1st of April Circular, and address him in endearing strains as ‘My dear—my dear!—Count Peter Schouvalóff.’ The Anglo-Russian Agreement was a fit outcome of such sudden friendship. While the Marquis of Salisbury and the Russian Ambassador are such bosom friends and cronies, the foreign interests of England will never be safe from dishonour.

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The clerks at the F. O. often expressed to me their wonder that I did not go in for the Press. I suggested to them that perhaps it would be incompatible with my position at the F. O. ; but they answered : ‘ Not at all, so long as I did not meddle with official news.’

One day, I happened to read aloud to MacFlartey a leader in the *Golos* describing the terms of peace which that paper demanded should be wrung from Turkey. For some days previous, there had been a general desire to know the feeling of the Russian people in regard to the continuance of the war. The feeling was strong outside the Foreign Office, and it was stronger, perhaps, within it. I could easily have given the F. O. all the information it wanted on that point, but the heads of the office did not seek to avail themselves of my services. In the Library, my news, printed in the newspapers, was constantly entered in the Political Register, and in the House of Commons, Mr. Bourke was frequently questioned respecting my paragraphs ; but it never occurred to Lord Tenterden to inquire whether I could



not assist the Office with my recognised knowledge of Russia.

MacFlartey expressed himself deeply interested in the article. At his suggestion I translated the principal part of it, and he took it to Sir Julian Pauncefote to lay before Lord Derby. Half-an-hour later he came back very excited. 'Do you see Derby?' he said. I looked out upon the Quadrangle, and saw disappearing under the archway of the India Office the well-known broad shoulders and burly form of the Foreign Secretary, reminding me of a well-to-do steward or affluent 'ganger.' 'Derby's gone down to the House to resign,' continued MacFlartey. 'And Salisbury will be here to-morrow.'

This unexpected circumstance prevented my translation from reaching the Secretary of State; and as I did not wish to lose my labour, I sent it off to the *Morning Post*, with an offer to furnish other contributions. Instead of putting the piece in as a short article, the *Morning Post* inserted it as a signed letter, and the next day Mac read it out to me with great gusto. I displayed

some vexation at the way I had been treated, and there the matter ended.

A few days later, Mac went on his annual two months' leave, and the department being once more short-handed, I did not have a moment to myself. As I have before remarked, each clerk in the Treaty Department had two months' leave, and there being three of them, the department was short-handed six months out of the twelve, and that, too, mostly in the busiest half of the twelvemonth. Hence the necessity for a writer.

The increase of copying took place simultaneously with a large development of my work outside the office. When I first entered the F. O. I had belonged only to two papers, the *Globe* and the *Morning Advertiser*, but now I could hold up my ten fingers and yet not exhaust the number that claimed my services, while every day the field for my activity grew larger and larger. Towards the middle of May matters had come to a pass beyond endurance. I could no longer rest myself at the F. O., for I had to work there as hard as I did at home. I determined, in consequence,

to leave the Public Service. The week I had chosen for my resignation was the last in May, but three days before the Saturday arrived for my departure, the circumstances took place which subsequently led to the disclosure of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, and involved me in the false glory of nine days' notoriety.

## THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT.

ON the afternoon of Wednesday, the 29th of May, Mr. Hervin was summoned into the Superintendent's room, and there remained nearly two hours, during which time the door was closed, and a document was dictated by Mr. Currie, Lord Salisbury's private secretary. MacFlartey was away at Florence. I was engaged preparing the Spanish Extradition Treaty for signature on the following Tuesday.

Hervin had to come into the room once or twice for foolscap paper, and it was during one of these intervals, when the door was on the swing, that I heard the words dictated, '*la frontière de la Russie en Asie.*'

For some days past, there had been rumours.

in circulation in regard to a compromise having been effected respecting the projected Congress ; and as our department had never before transacted any special political business concerning '*la frontière de la Russie en Asie*,' I guessed pretty correctly that something very important was on the carpet, and that they did not wish me to know it. The incubation of the mysterious document was still in progress when I left the office at six o'clock.

The following day, on my return from lunch, I found Hervin in his shirt-sleeves 'pegging away' with something on treaty paper. Our tables, as I have before remarked, were contiguous to each other, and I could therefore see that he was copying from a printed document headed 'Confidential.' I burned with curiosity to know what he was writing, because I instinctively felt that some momentous act of diplomacy was about to be consummated. As I imagined, however, it would be indiscreet to 'pump' him while he was busy, I sat down to my Treaty without remark.

At a quarter past four, Mr. Currie entered

the Superintendent's room, and a few minutes afterwards, Jemarch came in to us, and placing a printed paper on my table, told me to make two copies on treaty paper immediately. The document was headed 'Memorandum No. 2,' and was evidently a continuation of the one which Jemarch and Hervin were copying. Over the top of it was written 'For the use of the Cabinet only.' I took two sheets of paper out of the drawer, and worked till half-past five, by which time both copies were ready, and the contents well impressed upon my memory. I was still engaged reading over the documents to dot my *i*'s and cross my *t*'s, when Jemarch came in, exclaiming that he had finished his copy of Memorandum No. 1. Hervin, in reply, said he had yet a lot to do before his would be ready. Upon which Jemarch said :

'Marvin, then, had better come into my room and read over my Memorandum with me. It will save time, and you will have done yours by the time he has finished reading.'

I followed the Superintendent back to his room. He gave me the printed paper of

Memorandum No. 1. I began reading the French aloud as I stood at his side, but when I had got to the third line he exclaimed: 'Sit down and make yourself comfortable,' pointing to an easy chair at the side of his despatch-box. I removed the *Morning Post* from the chair and sat down.

'Read as fast as you can,' he continued, eagerly scanning his document.

Such was my joy at having got the secret in my grasp, and such my desire to commit it to memory, that I blundered through the French in a most shocking manner. Once the Superintendent lost his patience, and dashed on with the reading from his own written copy. I took no notice whether he read right or wrong, but busied myself with fixing the Memorandum upon Stokes's mnemonical pegs. At the end of the first page Jemarch himself found a mistake, and while he was scratching it out and putting in the proper word, I went over the page a second time and fixed the memory links with a stronger grapple. When we got to Clause 10, '*Quant à la vallée d'Alashkert,*' &c., we were interrupted by Mr. Currie, who bounded into

the room and asked excitedly if the Agreement was ready.

‘Not quite,’ said Jemarch; ‘we shall be ready directly.’

‘I hope you won’t be long,’ rejoined Currie. ‘Schouvalóff is most impatient to sign it. He wants to send it to Russia to-night. We are doing all we can to keep him quiet. We are keeping him going\* with tea.’

The interruption was priceless to me. I was enabled to run over the second page and Stokes it. Towards the end, Jemarch found a second blunder, and while erasing it I Stokes’d the document down to the bottom. The Superintendent then gave me one of my written copies of Memorandum No. 2, and we read the one against the other. Afterwards I returned to my room empty-handed to resume my Spanish Treaty.

In a few minutes’ time Hervin finished his copy of Memo. No. 1 and went into the next room to read it over. He spoke very loud, and as I leaned back in my chair I was enabled thereby to go over the ground a

\* Or ‘quiet with tea.’ I believe, however, he said ‘going.’



second time and strengthen the hold of the document upon the memory pegs. When he had finished, Jemarch took the four copies to Lord Salisbury's room for the Russian Ambassador and the Foreign Secretary to sign. Hervin re-entered the room.

‘It will cause quite a stir to-morrow,’ he said.

‘Indeed. Is it to be sent round to the papers?’

Hervin, I should observe, was continually in the Library, and no clerk in the office would have known better than he whether the document was to be issued to the Press or not.

‘Yes,’ he replied; ‘it will come out to-morrow or the day after. I dare say it will be known in the House to-night.’

We then began talking about the Agreement itself. I said it was a disgrace that Kars and Batoum should be handed over to Russia to be dealt with like Poland had been. The Agreement consisted of nothing but concessions to Russia. Did he know whether Russia had made any concessions to England? None, he believed. None what-

ever. 'Then,' I said to myself, 'the document deserves exposure.'

It was now a quarter past six. Hervin went downstairs to the Library for nearly a quarter of an hour. For ten minutes of that time I was left in the Treaty Department alone. Entirely alone. I spent it in walking up and down the room repeating what I had committed to memory.

At the end of ten minutes, somebody entered the Superintendent's room, and a few minutes later he came in to me. It was the clerk having charge of the Turkish correspondence—Mr. Bergne, I believe; and he held a printed copy of the 1st Memorandum in his hand, which he said he was going to send down to the Queen. Just then Hervin came back, and Bergne asked him some questions respecting alterations that had been made in the Anglo-Russian Agreement since the paper he held had been printed that afternoon. He referred incidentally to a Secret Treaty in connection with the last clause, which I did not understand at the time, but which I now imagine to have been the Anglo-Turkish Convention, unless, indeed, any other

Secret Treaty exists at the Foreign Office besides the unrevealed one of May 31.

Hervin made some remark to Bergne about the astonishing nature of the concessions. He said that everybody at the F. O. was amazed at them. England had given way on every point. He concluded with the remark that a statement would be made in the House that night, and that the Agreement would appear in the *Times* on the morrow. Mr. Bergne scarcely thought so soon, but he made no opposition when Hervin exclaimed :

‘ Well, it will come out the next day then.’

I said to myself, ‘ If the Government has the right to give a state document to the *Times* to-morrow, I have a right to give a summary to the *Globe* over night. The appearance of the document a few hours in advance can surely do no harm.’

‘ Well, Marvin, you ought to think it a great honour to have copied out that Memorandum,’ continued Hervin after Bergne had left the room.

‘ Honour,’ I said ; ‘ I think it a disgrace. But if you mean as regards the confidence

displayed in me, I do not see it in your light. The Memorandum was only given to me to copy because the Department was short-handed, and Jemarch hurried me through his draft as fast as he could to prevent my remembering what I read.'

'Certainly, if Mac had been here you would not have seen the Agreement.'

'And if MacFlartey came back to-morrow, the confidence would be withheld.'

Hervin believed it would.

So the 'unbounded confidence' which was spoken of at Bow Street resolved itself into this. The Department gave me its confidence grudgingly, because it could not help itself at the moment, and if I had remained all my life at the F. O., it would have had no effect on my prospects. I told Hervin bluntly that I wanted no such honour—I wanted prospects. Could he hold out any to me?

Well, he thought that possibly at some remote period, after working many years at tenpence an hour, I might succeed, if I had great interest, in getting a Secretary of State with sufficient elasticity of conscience to

break down the barriers of the Civil Service, to admit me into some supernumerary inferior position, whence I might rise in course of time to £200 a year—the pay of a messenger at the F. O. A splendid prospect, certainly, for an ambitious mind ! A magnificent reward for years of tenpenny drudgery !

There was only one drawback to this scheme of promotion. My hold on the Foreign Office was so slight that I might be discharged at a moment's notice. It was perfectly conceivable, Hervin admitted, that after ten or twenty years' service I might be turned off as poor as I entered the place. For instance, if the Marquis of Salisbury converted my writership into a clerkship for one of his *protégés*, there would be no further need for my services, and I should be sent back once more to Cannon Row. Such an eventuality was more likely to take place than the other.

Mr. Jemarch returned to the Department at a quarter to seven, and he said aloud to Hervin that Schouvalóff had signed the Agreement and gone. Nothing further being wanted that evening, I was told I could go.

I completed my toilette and went away. I had been bound to no secrecy. No caution had been given me to keep my knowledge to myself, and I fully believed that the Agreement would be published *in extenso* in the *Times* on the morrow.

Looking behind me, I could see two avenues in the past. There was the beaten path of the Civil Service, along which I had tramped with no encouragement, no thanks, and no prospects; and there was the path of the Press, full of obstacles overcome, and yielding me bright promise in the future. That I had overcome those obstacles was not so much owing to any qualities I might possess, as to the patience exhibited by my trainers during a very trying period of apprenticeship. The position I occupied that moment in regard to the Press was wholly due to the encouragement and stimulus I had received from the *Globe*, and but for the *Globe* I should still have been a common tenpenny writer. Out of gratitude, and not from either a spirit of levity or a desire of gain, I resolved to proceed to the Strand and disclose the Anglo-Russian Agreement.

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The following morning I found that the daily papers had unanimously ignored my Summary. All but the *Morning Advertiser*, which declared it to be a 'skit.' This did not surprise me. I could hardly believe in the Anglo-Russian Agreement myself.

I knew very well when I wrote out the Summary in the Strand that there would be a 'row' at the F. O. the next morning, and I therefore addressed a letter to my friend Dick to meet me in Downing Street to decide the course I should adopt. I placed particular value upon his counsel, because he never shirked speaking his mind, whether the advice was acceptable to my vanity or not. He usually acted the part of candid critic at my lectures, and enabled me to improve my delivery by freely pointing out my faults. Dick agreed with me that my reputation depended upon the answer I made to any inquiries, and that in the event of my being asked whether I had disclosed the Summary, it would be my duty to avow that I had. This was an unpleasant prospect, but it could

not be evaded, and I entered the Foreign Office with my tongue prepared for the encounter.

Jemarch was at his post, but he said nothing. Hervin arrived at one. Almost his first words were :

‘Well, it’s not in the papers yet : I’m surprised at that.’

‘So am I,’ I replied ; ‘I looked through the papers this morning and I observed it in none.’

I believe that he went into the Superintendent’s room and made the same remark, but of that I will not be positive. I continued my Spanish Treaty, and finished the duplicate for Spain at half-past one. I took it into the Superintendent’s room. Jemarch was sitting at his table with his writing-pad open before him. At his side, and next to the easy-chair in which I had sat the night before, was his opened despatch-box, disclosing despatches and documents, some of them copies in my own handwriting, and most of them known to me. On top of these was a printed draft. It was marked Secret and Confidential, and headed “For the use of the Cabinet only.” As I stood at the side of



Jemarch, while he looked through my treaty, I could read every word of the document as easily as if I had held it in my hand. My waistcoat buttons were only a few inches away from the despatch-box. The document was short. It was connected with the East. It was the Secret Treaty of May 31st, 1878.

I had read it over three or four times, and had thoroughly committed it to memory, before Jemarch finished his reverie. He then noticed that the Secret Treaty stared me in the face, and carelessly threw a sheet of treaty paper over it. I returned to my room, and a few minutes later went out to lunch, leaving both him and Hervin engaged writing out the Secret Treaty for signature.

When I returned at half-past two, the task was nearly finished. Jemarch took both copies into Salisbury's room, and came back after a while, saying that they were signed.

At four o'clock somebody hurriedly entered the Superintendent's room and closed the inner door. In a few minutes' time Hervin was called in. The door was closed.

I guessed that the *Globe* containing the Summary had found its way at last to the

office, and prepared for the storm that was about to burst upon me. The door opened again. A clerk rushed into No. 33.

‘It’s out!’ he ejaculated.

‘What’s out?’

‘The Anglo-Russian Agreement. It’s in the papers.’

‘I thought it was to appear in the papers.’

‘No. It was to have been kept secret from Austria. Salisbury is in a furious rage. He swears Schouvalóff has done it.’

The clerk hurriedly left the room. Returning ten minutes later, he said :

‘It appeared in the *Globe* late last night. Nobody saw it : and when Schouvalóff called at three o’clock to-day, he had not seen it. Half an hour later he drove back from Charing Cross with the *Globe* in his hand, and showed it to Salisbury. Who has disclosed it, nobody knows. There is to be a question asked in the House to-night, and the Government are in a devil of a funk to know what to answer. It is a most mysterious thing. The Agreement was not printed till one o’clock yesterday : it was signed at half-past six, and was published in the *Globe* at nine.

The *Globe* had it before the Queen. Such a thing never occurred before in history.'

All the rest of the afternoon the archway under my room resounded with the rolling of carriages into the Quadrangle to inquire about the Anglo-Russian Agreement. Every Ambassador and Minister called on the Foreign Secretary; and the Foreign Secretary, I imagine, had a very awkward time of it.

I expected that Jemarch or Hervin would tax me with the disclosure, but they evidently did not suspect me, and, to my exceeding astonishment, I was allowed to leave the Foreign Office that night without any inquiries being put to me on the matter.

The sudden death of a Member of Parliament in the House relieved the Government for a term of their temporary embarrassment, and left the *Globe* in full possession of the news from the Friday till the following Monday. It was then that the Marquis of Salisbury, in reply to Earl Grey's question whether the Summary was 'true,' answered that it was 'wholly unworthy of their lordships' confidence.'

Outside the Foreign Office, as every one

knows, the noble lord's answer created the universal impression that the *Globe* had published a piece of false intelligence. Its reputation, I saw with anger, suffered cruelly. Inside the Foreign Office the noble lord's answer produced a feeling of amazement. A clerk of twenty-five years' service, entering the Treaty Department on the Tuesday morning, exclaimed in my presence, 'What do you think of the Marquis of Salisbury last night?' The same clerk then and there took out from his pocket a copy of the *Globe*, and going through each of the points of the Summary, ticked them all off as correct except the one in reference to East Roumelia.

What was I to do under the circumstances?

I thought of writing to the papers, disclosing my share in the transaction; but after what had occurred I felt it to be extremely probable that the Marquis of Salisbury might rise in the House and say, 'My lords, the question asked in reference to the letter of Mr Charles Marvin in the morning papers excites my amazement. That a mere copyist, receiving tenpence an hour, should be entrusted with the copying of documents in-

tended only for the use of the Cabinet, and therefore the most secret that can be imagined, is as absurd as it is incredible. The poor man is evidently a victim of a great delusion, and I can only congratulate the *Globe* upon having such men on its staff of political writers.'

To me it appeared that there was only one way of dealing with the matter, and that was to divulge the Full Text of the 'Agreement.' I resolved never to leave the Foreign Office until I had effected this.

But it seemed so improbable that I should be able to carry out my purpose before the conclusion of the Congress, when the Full Text would be of no interest, that I adopted the clumsy *ad interim* expedient of bolstering up the Summary. I wrote to all my papers declaring the disclosure to be true. The *Morning Advertiser* was the only one that betrayed my confidence.

A few days after the latter had published the long account of the Anglo-Russian Agreement which I sent Captain Hamber in the shape of a letter from Russia, the Full Text, by a remarkable succession of circumstances which I

hope some day to disclose when the individuals concerned in it can escape official injury, came entire into my possession. I took it to the *Globe* to retrieve my reputation as contributor of reliable news. The *Globe* published it.

The Foreign Office assembled on Friday, June 14, without being aware of what had appeared in the first edition of the evening paper. Shortly after two o'clock somebody rushed over to Downing Street from the House of Parliament, and confusion and dismay speedily sped their way through the office. The news was telegraphed at once to the Earl of Beaconsfield and the Marquis of Salisbury. A copy of the *Globe* was despatched to the Queen. In the evening a special messenger took to Berlin another copy to lay before the astounded and discomfited Marquis. Throughout the afternoon the Foreign Office was visited by Ambassadors, Ministers, and Secretaries, who asked very awkward questions and received very confused answers.

To judge from the silence observed in the Treaty Department, I should imagine that suspicion immediately fixed itself upon me.

Still, they asked no questions, and I was allowed to leave the office a second time without undergoing the anticipated examination. It seemed probable that I should be allowed to carry out entire my design of staying a month longer in my situation, and then leaving with the secret still unrevealed.

My position was exceedingly painful. It was bad enough to have to watch the storm raging outside the Foreign Office, and to hear the clamour of an astonished city demanding to know the discloser, without having to sit six hours a day in a silent room, expecting every moment to have to enter the adjoining chamber and there confront a host of angry Barnacles. On the Saturday afternoon my address was obtained from me, on the pretext of summoning me for Congress work on the Sunday. On Monday morning, I found that my desk had been searched and my writing-pad examined. On Tuesday, I was considerably startled by the sight of a man on the roof of the India Office intently watching my room. On Wednesday, the intimation came from London that the *Morning Advertiser* was about to betray me, and I

spent the best part of the night in destroying my papers and preparing my lodgings for the expected Government search. On Thursday, I went to the Office in the full anticipation of having to face a conclave of infuriated clerks, and I rehearsed on my way the part I had resolved to play before them. Summoned into their presence, it was my intention instantly to resign, and to dare them to do their worst. They could not make me speak if I did not wish to do so. In the morning, however, Mr. Alexander Rumer's very curious letter in the *Standard*, throwing the suspicion upon Count Schouvalóff, created great talk at the Foreign Office, and diverted for a few hours the attention from me. On Thursday night, I imagine that Captain Hamber forwarded to the Government, or caused to be forwarded, or allowed to be forwarded, the 'Private and Confidential' letter which I had written him on the 10th June, informing him of the authenticity of the Anglo-Russian Agreement. As the *Morning Advertiser* owed me some fifteen or twenty guineas, and for a twelvemonth I had acted as its 'Own,' its 'Occasional,' its 'Russian,'



its 'Military,' its 'Naval,' and its 'Special' Correspondent,\* I imagined that any communication I might address to it would be held sacred. I trusted it all the more because the editor was an officer in Her Majesty's Army. But, strange to relate, on or about Thursday, June 20, *the letter I sent the Morning Advertiser found its way to Downing Street*, and I have a very strong impression that it passed on its road through the Russian Embassy.

On Friday, there were undoubted indications that the game was nearly played out, and in the evening, as I afterwards learned, Detective Manton arrived at Plumstead to watch my house. On Saturday, everything was quiet again, and as nothing transpired the early part of the following week, I began to breathe once more, imagining that the Government had determined to do nothing further in regard to the inquiry until the close of the Berlin Congress, by which time I should be out of the Civil Service. All this while the detectives were watching me night and day, and keeping me under their eye until

\* Titles chosen by the *Morning Advertiser* itself.

the order for my arrest should arrive from Berlin. On Wednesday morning, the order reached the Foreign Office from the Marquis of Salisbury to prosecute me on the charge of stealing public documents—although none were missing—and in the afternoon the warrant was obtained for my arrest. By some means or other I evaded the detectives, or I should have been arrested on leaving the Foreign Office at six o'clock, and would have been subjected to six hours' extra incarceration in the King Street cells.

At eight o'clock in the evening a knock came to the door, and I was told that two gentlemen wished to see me. I had been expecting some friends from Russia, and went downstairs to the parlour without any anticipation of what was to follow. The gentlemen were strangers to me, and had short, knobby sticks under their arms. One looked something like a retired non-commissioned officer, and the other would have been taken any day for a buyer in the City. I was about to ask them their business, when the latter, closing the door, said :

‘This is rather an unpleasant affair, Mr.

Marvin, and we wish to do it as quietly as possible. The paper I have in my hands is a warrant for your arrest on the charge of removing from its place of deposit for the time being a document, the property of Her Majesty's Government, for fraudulent purposes, etc., etc. We shall have to search your rooms, you know, and take you and your papers to King Street Police Station, where you will be locked up for the night. Tomorrow morning you will be brought before the magistrate and charged at Bow Street.'

I had never imagined that the Foreign Office would resort to such extreme measures as these without some preliminary inquiry and threats. The surprise, consequently, was a great shock to me. Even now, though a twelvemonth has elapsed since my arrest took place, I never hear a strange rat-tat-tat at the door, accompanied by a demand, in a strange voice, for 'Mr. Marvin,' without feeling an irresistible impulse to lock myself in my study and demand, through the keyhole, the name and business of the stranger, before placing myself in his power.

However, it was not in my nature to display any agitation, however dislocated my thoughts might be. The detectives followed me upstairs and began searching my room. On the table was my 'copy' for the *Globe* for the next day, and a batch of paragraphs for *Mayfair*. These were promptly annexed by Sergeant Andrews, the detective who looked like a buyer; and then, whilst he and Manton pursued their search, I prepared myself to accompany them. My first act, after I was ready, was to write a letter to the Foreign Office resigning my situation, and my second to despatch a messenger to Dick. By this time all my letters and papers had been collected in a mass on the floor. Whole piles of the *Golos*, *Moskovski Vedomosti*, and other Russian papers, were seized with strange avidity by the detectives. So also my letters in Russian from Russian friends, Russian books, and Russian manuscripts.

They took everything. Batches of letters; my collection of autographs, including several of Mr. Gladstone's post-cards, and Mr. Froude's illegible letter of advice; piles of rejected manuscript, and the whole of

‘Linguistry’ and the ‘Empire of the English.’ Boxes were cleared out, cupboards were ransacked, and an entire chest of drawers emptied of papers by the summary and simple process of turning each drawer upside down and letting the contents fall in a confused mass on to the floor. At least £20 worth of news was thrown upon the heap and wasted, for when I got my papers back again from the Treasury it had grown stale and worthless. The search over, Manton went out and got a baker’s sack, which my papers nearly filled, and this he sent in a cab to the railway-station. The spoil was about as much as a man could carry. If I had not prepared my lodgings beforehand for the search, the plunder would have filled the cab, and perhaps half of another likewise. Everything being ready, we walked comfortably down to the station, a detective on either side, and the Discloser in the middle. I begged of my escort that all references to the Anglo-Russian Agreement should be tabooed in our conversation, and the other subjects we took up, in connection with the organization of the Russian and English police, proved so inte-

resting, that it was a most enjoyable ride to London. Andrews, especially, proved to be a particularly intelligent man, and to me seemed all that could be desired of a model detective. Arrived at Charing Cross, a cab was hired, and we drove to Scotland Yard, where my papers were locked up for the night. We then walked down Parliament Street, past the Horse Guards and the Home Office to King Street Station. Big Ben was booming eleven as we entered the building.

Inside was an inspector at the desk, smoking a cigar and talking to a policeman in front of him. I was placed in a little bit of a dock at the side of the desk, and a bar slipped across to enclose me in it. Andrews read the warrant, the inspector took my name and address and age, and I was then allowed to leave the dock again to be searched by the detective, and to have all my things taken from me, except a few shillings which were left in my pocket to pay for refreshments.

‘All right!’ exclaimed the inspector, when this ordeal was over.

‘Come this way,’ added a policeman,

gruffly ; and, bidding my escort adieu, I followed him across a paved yard to a row of cells with an enclosed passage in front.

The last door but one of the row was already unlocked. The policeman motioned me into it. I walked inside. He swung the door heavily to and locked it. He then tramped heavily away.

Had I been arrested on suspicion of any crime, save political, in Russia, I should have been locked up in a decent bedroom, with furniture and fittings very little different to what I could have obtained for ordinary accommodation outside the station. It is a maxim of English law, that a man is innocent until proved guilty. On the part of the English police, the practice seems to be to regard a man guilty until proved innocent. Although arrested simply on suspicion, I was treated the same as if I had been tried and convicted of murder, or any other monstrous crime.

My cell was a brick den, white-washed at the top and having a streak of yellow-wash below as a sort of wainscoting to the sides. A two-foot plank ran round two sides of the

cell, about a yard from the ground, and formed the only fittings in the place. The size of the cell was twelve feet by six. It was lighted by a gas-burner near the door. On the asphalt-floor was sawdust, decorated with recent marks of spittle. The atmosphere was compounded of two pungent perfumes. One arose from the sanitary arrangement fixed at the corner of the cell near the door, and the other from the deodorising-powder scattered about to counteract its influence. Fortunately for me, crime was slack in Westminster that night, or I might have had a burglar or a drunkard as a companion—the cell being constructed for two inmates. As it was, I was luckily the only prisoner in the array of cells that night.

After a few minutes the policeman returned again, and threw me in a black blanket and a hard leather-cushion—something between a pincushion and a horsecollar—very greasy, very odorous, and which a beggar would not have troubled to pick up from the gutter. These two articles, with the two-foot plank, constituted my bed and bedding for the night.



For a few minutes my thoughts were as painful as can be conceived. Apparently I was ruined. Performing all my Press work through the post, and scarcely ever visiting the offices, I had not had an opportunity of informing the *Globe* of my connection with other papers; and, as I had propped up the Summary in the *Morning Advertiser* without their authorization or knowledge, it did not seem to me that I had the claim upon them which I otherwise might have had. Probably, on publicity being given to the Disclosure, my other papers might throw me over, and thus, even if I passed safely through the trial—and I had no fear about that—I should find all my prospects swept away at a moment when I had fancied the road broad and clear before me.

With the Foreign Office I was deeply incensed for exposing me to the indignity of a night in the cells. The Government could just as well have had me arrested early on the morrow. I had no wish to run away. And if they had but questioned me before resorting to such extreme measures, they would hardly have resolved upon the publicity of a

State prosecution. Finally, I am afraid I thought very unkind things about the *Morning Advertiser*. In my anger, I believe I abused it. This was unchristian-like, I admit, but the provocation was very great. It was really too bad of Captain Hamber to put his own St. Petersburg Correspondent in the King Street cells.

The heavy tramp of the policeman aroused me. He pulled up the gauze cover of the grating in the door—the only window in the cell—and asked me if I wanted any supper.

‘You can order what you like, and we must get you what you order.’

‘What can I have?’ I asked dubiously.

‘I don’t know. But whatever you ask for we must get you, so long as you can pay for it.’

‘Then, if it will cause no trouble, I should like some coffee and a roll and butter.’

‘Very well. Threepence, if you please.’

In the course of half an hour he arrived with a pint of coffee in a jug, a cup, and a pile of bread and butter on a dinner-plate.

‘I could not bring it quicker,’ he said

apologetically ; ' I had, to call up the man on duty to light the fire to make it.'

' I am sorry you did that. I would not have ordered it if I had thought it would have so disturbed you.'

' You couldn't help it. Them's the regulations. What you order, that we must get you, and never mind the trouble.'

He opened the door while saying this, and placing my supper on the bench, left me to myself. The coffee was not bad, but the bread and butter—ugh!—it was of the heavy, home-made, Mrs. Joe Gargery description, and went away again untasted.

Supper finished, I stripped to my waistcoat, and, throwing the blanket over my shoulders, lay down on the board to sleep. In accordance with my usual custom, I went over in my mind all that had taken place during the day, and arranged my plans for the morrow. On looking back, I saw that throughout my wanderings, and ups and downs in life, I had always come successfully out of misfortune and difficulty, and as Destiny had never failed me yet, why should I, I asked, distrust Destiny now ? The best

thing to be done was to dismiss all concern about the Anglo-Russian Agreement from my mind, and to leave events to shape their prescribed course. I would stake my Destiny against circumstances, no matter how adverse, any day. I have always done so. I continue to do so still.

It is all very well, if one has genius or talent, to despise a reliance of this sort, but when one's powers are limited and aspirations large, a belief in Destiny becomes a necessity. Besides, in these shallow days of ours, when indifference and supineness characterize whole sections of society, a belief in Destiny, coupled with a wholesome depreciation of one's abilities, is perhaps about the best stepping-stone to success that can be thought of.

I was just falling into a doze when Big Ben—he seemed so close that I sometimes fancied him in the yard—boomed half-past one. A wrangling was heard in the police-station. A drunkard, no doubt. I got up and went to the grating to listen.

‘You can’t see the prisoner to-night,’ said a voice, evidently the inspector’s.

‘I tell you I must. It is most imperative

that I should. He was only brought here on condition that I should see him. If you won't let me see him I shall go off to Scotland Yard and ask the reason why.'

The inspector relented. Steps were heard approaching. In a few seconds Dick appeared the other side of the grating.

'Keep up your spirits, old fellow. Everything is going on all right. I shall be stirring the first thing in the morning.'

'I am all right here.'

A few words more and he was gone.

'After all,' I said to myself as I got into bed again, 'this little affair of mine will have one blessed advantage. It will show me who my friends are.'

A little black speck crawled over my shirt-front as I said this. It was a bug. I flicked him off into the sawdust. A moment later I discovered another advancing along the plank towards my face. He also shared the same fate. Yet another one, crawling down the wall. Good heavens! the cell was swarming with vermin.

I seized my blanket and rubbed the wall down everywhere near the plank. Then I

rubbed the plank down. Finally I threw the filthy blanket into the corner by the door and hurled the filthy leather pillow after it. I had a notion for a moment of setting fire to the blanket to kill all the live stock in it, but I gave up the plan as being a measure too extreme for the circumstances.

There was nothing now to be done but to make up a bed *à la Russe*. Taking my boots off, I tied them in my handkerchief—I had done so several times in Russia while travelling—and they made a very supportable pillow. My waistcoat I placed under my hipbone, just where the prominent part hurt itself against the bare board. My coat I threw over me for a blanket.

The situation reminded me very strongly of a night I once passed near Orenburg. The place we put up at was a dilapidated house, and the only furniture in our room was a sofa and a chair. The floor swarmed with black beetles: the sofa swarmed with fleas. My travelling companion did not mind the beetles, of which I myself have a horror; and, on my part, as my skin is proof against vermin, I did not mind the fleas. I had

already been travelling some three weeks in the Oorals, and had grown used to the frequency of their company. I therefore endured the fleas during the night, while my companion allowed himself to be overrun with beetles.

‘Thanks to Destiny,’ I said to myself, ‘roughing it in Russia has hardened me for a night in the filthy King Street cells.’

I should have slept soundly but for the interruptions of the police, who came every hour to my cell, and flashing a light upon me, demanded loudly if all was right. These very unnecessary interruptions broke upon my slumber and kept me in a dreamy condition the whole of the night. Strangely enough, my thoughts did not run at all upon the Anglo-Russian Agreement, but upon Russia, and from darkness to daybreak I went over the old, old ground—ground that I had never gone over in my sleep since I had returned to England.

With a Polish Fagin as driver, I fancied myself bumping over the roads near Wilna, and before the ride had closed with my arrival at the Polish magnate’s house, I was

off again to Tamboff, the sledge-bells ringing merrily over the steppe, and the peasants bowing and saluting the Bahrin as we dashed through the village to his handsome château. Then the scene changed, and I was at Nijni Novgorod buying curiosities at the Fair; then there was the trip down the Volga, the Kremlin at Kazan, the monastery at Oufa, and the ride for days across country till Orenburg was reached, and its Kirghiz camps beyond. Then I drank mare's milk with the Kirghiz chiefs to the health of the Tsar Osvobodetel; and then clambering on to the bare back of a horse to carry me across the stream, I found myself landed alongside the Big Bell at Moscow, where I awoke.'

The Big Bell's little brother, Ben of Westminster, was striking eight. I got up, and shortly afterwards the policeman on duty brought me a bucket of water, which he placed on a stool in the passage. He also brought me a piece of mottled soap and a ragged towel. While I was dipping my head into the bucket, he said :

‘ Well, what's your little game ?’



‘Something out of the usual run of offences,’ I answered, wiping my face.

‘Ah, in the swell-mob line?’

‘Very much in the swell-mob,’ I replied, thinking of the Barnacles at the F. O. ‘I have been very much in the swell-mob line of late.’

‘First offence?’ This carelessly.

‘And last, I hope,’ I said.

‘Come, that’s good. I like that. You don’t get over me in that manner. I’ve seen you here before.’

‘When?’

‘Never you mind. You’re an old hand at the swell-mob, but you won’t deceive me. So, none of your innocent airs while I’m on the beat. Come, have you done washing?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then in you go. Stop—I’ll take away the blanket and pillow.’

‘And the vermin with them.’

‘What? are they populated?’

‘Overcrowded—sending off colonies in every direction.’

‘Ah well! we have a dirty lot here sometimes—many I wouldn’t touch with the end

of a prop. But, I say, what are you going to have for breakfast ?

‘ Coffee, roll and butter, and two eggs.’

My cell was too stale and chloride-of-limy for me to care for anything else.

‘ Sixpence, then.’

I gave him the money and he walked away. He was a very young Bobby, and deeply sagacious. He knew more about my previous career than I myself did.

Returning, after an absence of half an hour, he passed my breakfast through the grating. He might just as well have opened the door and deposited the whole of the things at once upon the bench, but his conduct may have been influenced by some Barnacle regulation emanating from the Barnacle Office in Scotland Yard. Anyhow, he took the trouble to slip first the eggs through, then the plate cornerwise, then the cup, followed by the saucer cornerwise; after which he passed the jug through diagonally, and then handed in the battered Britannia metal egg-spoon. The bread and butter he passed through with his fingers. It was unpleasant enough to eat it without any such

contamination as this. One expects nastiness among the dirty moojiki of Russia, but one does not expect things of this sort in London.

For the sake of forcing an appetite I imposed on myself the delusion that I was roughing it again on the Volga, and by this means got the coffee and the eggs and the crusty part of the bread and butter—the crumby was uneatable—into me. I then amused myself by looking out of the grating, whence there was a view through the passage-window of the scene in the station-yard.

It was a beautiful summer's morning, and the sun shone brightly into the arid enclosure. Policemen stood about in groups, some just come off their beat, others just going upon it. Some read the newspapers. Policemen in plain clothes hurried about with loaves of bread, or coffee-pots, or kettles in their hands, and on their way stopped to talk with men who were plainly detectives. Several of these were dressed as country louts, and acted before each other the *rôle* they meant to play during the morning. One man with a jolly red face acted his part particularly well, and

I could hardly help applauding when, at the end of the performance, he dropped his whip and his waggoner's coat, and changed in an instant the innocent, rollicking expression of rural simplicity for the keen, determined look of Detective X. Every now and again a score of policemen would be drawn up in a line. The inspector would then come out to examine them, and along the line would run the "One—Two—Three—Four—Five," etc., till the last man was reached, when the inspector would give the word of command, 'Right about face—march !' and the Bobbies would file off along a passage into King Street. The performance was enlivened at intervals by a gutter-organ outside the station, which cheered my captivity with the strains of 'Nancy Lee.' I have felt partial to organ-grinders ever since.

At ten o'clock the prison-van drove into the yard, and there being no offenders to take away, it drove off again. The policeman on duty came to my grating afterwards, and told me that my case would not come on till the afternoon. At eleven Dick arrived. Everything was going on all right. My friends

were stirring, and the *Globe* had engaged George Lewis.

‘With Destiny and George Lewis on my side,’ I said to myself, ‘I can well afford to leave the affair to itself. Events will set themselves right in the end.’

A few minutes afterwards an inspector or sergeant came to my cell. ‘Was I all right?’ ‘Yes, I was all right.’ He then went away, before I could notice his rank or speak any further with him. At the end of the passage he was stopped by the policeman on duty.

‘What’s he in for?’ asked my guardian.

‘The Anglo-Russian Agreement. They say he’s a Russian spy, who has been working as a writer at the Foreign Office, and stealing documents for Count Schóuvaloff.’

‘Oh, indeed! Rum affair.’

The inspector made no answer, but walked away.

Very rum affair, indeed, to be arrested on suspicion of being a Russian, and of working as a Russian spy in Downing Street. That accounted for the ravenous greed of the detectives in regard to everything Russian in my possession. The Marquis of Salisbury

imagined he had discovered a Russian in his department. He had made a mistake. He had found a Tartar. The only Russian in Downing Street was himself—the bosom friend of the Ex-Inquisitor of Russia, Count Peter Schouvalóff.

But supposing I had been a Russian, and, as a Russian spy, had copied Cabinet secrets at tenpence an hour at the F. O., what enormous injury I might have done the Government! How largely the interests of the country might have suffered at my hands!

The policemen on duty at the cells were changed every hour. Some of them were friendly, and chatted at the grating; others were surly, and covered over the opening to prevent me from amusing myself by looking out. This threw me on my own resources for amusement. The best amusement I could think of was to sleep. For months I had been so overworked that I had abundance of this commodity to dispose of. A day with nothing to do was a real luxury, and I enjoyed the holiday accorded me to the utmost. Placing myself in the corner, I

dozed till two o'clock, when I ordered lunch—coffee, eggs, and bread and butter. I did not want to sicken myself with anything else.

I was busily eating my second egg when a scuffling was heard in the passage. The door of the cell next but one to mine was opened and closed. The footsteps then died away, and a groaning was heard.

'*Mein Gott! mein Gott!*' in tones of the deepest anguish.

The Treaty Department had pursued me even to King Street. It was an Extradition case. The man was a fugitive cashier from Amsterdam, who had come over to England with his master's till. His remorse was dreadful to hear. He cursed himself in German for coming to perfidious England, he implored help from heaven to assist him out of the scrape; and then he burst out weeping, and wept till his sobs brought to his grating the policeman, with the cheery remark 'to keep his pecker up and not break down.'

At half-past three I was awakened out of a sound sleep by a surly voice :

'Now then—now then!'

I looked up.

‘They’re waiting for you.’

I put on my coat and hat and followed the policeman into the station. The two detectives were there. Placing myself between them, I accompanied them to Bow Street.

It was almost worth spending the night in the cells to realise how happy and delightful life appeared out of them. A summer breeze in a leafy country lane, after a storm overnight, could not have been fresher and sweeter than the atmosphere of that filthy little avenue—King Street—seemed to me. I suppose I looked somewhat stale after my sixteen hours’ incarceration. I know I felt dirty, verminy, and chloride-of-limy, and more inclined to cast away my clothes in disgust and step into a bath than appear before the spectators in the police-court. The detectives noticed this, and kindly suggested that I should freshen myself up with a walk along the Embankment. ‘We had abundant time to spare,’ they said.

We took a circuitous walk round by the Embankment, and then passed through Covent Garden to inhale the perfume of the



flowers. We arrived at Bow Street quite a quarter of an hour too soon, and pending my appearance in the dock, I passed the time among prisoners, policemen, and detectives in the prisoners' room.

I was used to lecturing, so that my appearance in public did not disturb me. The first to give evidence was Jemarch. To my amazement he expressed his belief that Hervin took into his room my two copies of the Memorandum II., and that he compared Memorandum I. with him. It was all I could do to refrain from calling out: 'Don't you remember Currie coming in while I was reading them, and telling you he was keeping Schouvalóff going with tea?'

I was indignant that the impression should go forth that I had gained surreptitious access to the two documents composing the Anglo-Russian Agreement, when Jemarch himself had forced them upon me, and made me read them whether I wanted to do so or not. To make matters more unpleasant, the court was without reporters after five o'clock, and as the cross-examination of Jemarch, displaying my innocence, was not published

in the next day's papers, my character, for a fortnight, was subjected to the most odious of charges, and I was commonly spoken of as 'The Foreign Office Thief.'

I will not refer more fully to the trial, but I will add that the whole of the clever cross-examination of Hervin on the third occasion bore reference to whether he would support the Superintendent in the impression he had allowed to go forth, that he had read over his copy of Memo. No. I with his Assistant. Hervin went as far as to say that he believed he had done so, but he would go no further. Had he done so I should have filed a declaration to the contrary, and have indicted him on the charge of perjury.

The end of the prosecution is well known. I was acquitted. The magistrate, in his decision, wholly exonerated me of any blame in regard to the disclosure of the Summary, but condemned the divulging of the Full Text.

As he had refused to let Mr. Lewis speak in my defence, saying he did not wish to hear any more, there being no case against me, and had heard only the Government version of my conduct, he had no right to indulge in

the latter reflection. Had the Marquis of Salisbury admitted the truth of the Summary, the Full Text would never have been divulged. There would have been no need for it. It was the course adopted by the Foreign Secretary that impelled me to heroic measures.

On quitting Bow Street, Dick and I went down to Charing Cross to see the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary arrive from Berlin—‘peace with honour’—Beaconsfield peace and Salisbury honour. The Prime Minister’s campaign against Russia had closed, and he was returning home to wear the laurel. My campaign with the Barnacles was also over, and circumstances had grown up since my arrest which promised to make my life prosperous and smooth before me. We found it would be some time before the plenipotentiaries arrived at the station, so, laying in a stock of champagne, Dick and I—Peace with Honour—set off for my bachelor lodgings at Plumstead.

## LAST WORDS.

IN describing the Public Service, I have purposely confined myself to representative types, and have left elaborate descriptions of the respective offices and the gear of Government to be written by other hands. In my representations of the Barnacles and their ways I have refused to place myself in a heroic aspect, and have dealt as freely and as frankly with my own courses as with those of others. I am aware I did not play the part of Tom Pinch. Had I done so I should still be alongside Quemby, adding up sums in the Custom-House export ledgers. So long as I imagined that promotion in the Public Service proceeded by merit, I devoted myself heart and soul to the business of the State; but when I found that an Act of Parliament

barred the progress from the lower to the higher ranks, and that no qualification, however prodigious, could carry me beyond the fatal boundary, my sense of duty recoiled upon itself, and demanded that I should use my tenpenny toil as a stepping-stone to better things. Throughout my peripatetic career in the Service I was always haunted with the belief that I should some day write about the Barnacles, and this impelled me to take constant note of their ways, and to regard them in the light of an outsider. I never fell under the influence of their *esprit de corps*. For six years previous I had lived, a solitary foreigner, among Russians, and the habit of regarding myself as an isolated observer, and a being distinct from the mass, followed me into the Public Service, and influenced me throughout my course. To me, a journalist, the Barnacles were foreigners, and I sojourned among them just as I had sojourned among the Russians, the Poles, and the Tartars.

I have advisedly restricted my remarks to the public departments in which I served; but persons who are acquainted with the War Office, the Horse Guards, the Admi-

rally, the Treasury, and other offices, will have no difficulty in applying my observations to them also. There are many varieties of the Barnacle family, but the type is everywhere the same.

With but few exceptions, I consider the Service throughout as over-estimated and over-paid. That I regard many of the officials under-worked is too transparent in my pages to be repeated here. Foremost among the departments for activity and zeal I would place the Post Office. Somerset House I would place next; then the Custom-House, and afterwards the Foreign Office. Taking the standard of labour in the City as represented by 100, the ratio of work in the public departments I would apportion as follows :

|                                         | POINTS. |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|
| A clerk in the City . . . . .           | 100     |
| A clerk at the Post Office . . . . .    | 75      |
| A clerk at Somerset House . . . . .     | 60      |
| A clerk at the Custom-House . . . . .   | 40      |
| A clerk at the Foreign Office . . . . . | 30      |

A glance at this scale will show that the clerk at Somerset House does twice the amount of work performed by his *confrère* at

the Foreign Office, and that the latter does not work one-third so hard as the clerk in the City. I might have fixed the standard of labour by the toil of the book-keeper, of the accountant, of the school-teacher, or of the newspaper reporter, but the clerk in the City serves equally well.

The pay of a skilled clerk in the City is about £100 per annum. Taking this as our standard of the market remuneration for clerical labour, the scale reveals itself as follows :

|                                         |      |
|-----------------------------------------|------|
| A clerk in the City . . . . .           | £100 |
| A clerk at the Post Office . . . . .    | £180 |
| A clerk at Somerset House . . . . .     | £250 |
| A clerk at the Custom-House . . . . .   | £300 |
| A clerk at the Foreign Office . . . . . | £500 |

I would display by this that the clerk at the Foreign Office is paid twice as much as the clerk at Somerset House in proportion to the work performed, and that the clerk at the Custom House receives three times more pay than he would be considered worth if he were employed in the City.

There is nothing so supremely intellectual in the work performed by the clerks in our

public offices to render it requisite that they should have better developed brains than are obtainable in the City. The book-keeper in a public accountant's office, the correspondence clerk in a shipping office, or the ledger clerk in a warehouse, would be more than competent to take charge of any of the highly-paid seats I encountered in my course, although I greatly doubt whether the Barnacles holding those seats would be able to acquit themselves with satisfaction in the commercial functions of the other. The abilities of the former are gauged by the market standard at £150 per annum ; the services of the latter are estimated by the State at £300 or £400, or, including pensions, holidays, and other privileges, at £500 or £600 per annum. It may be urged that the City clerks are largely underpaid. Still, it is impossible to resist the conclusion, whether it be made in comparison with the City clerks or not, that the clerks in our Public Offices are very much overpaid indeed.

The fact of the matter is, that by means of the competitive examination system we set a steam-hammer to crack a nut. We demand that men with the most costly education of the



day shall do work which any two-year-old clerk in the City, with only the four R's and a few extras at his fingers'-ends, could do equally well. We demand that men shall learn Latin and Greek, and higher mathematics, and then we set them to work all their lives at registering names or adding up tiny addition sums—work which any properly supervised convict, or idiot from Earlswood Asylum, could do to the country's satisfaction. And year by year we are raising the educational test, and increasing the evil, till at last it appears probable that we shall exige Latin and Greek from the very messengers and hall-door porters.

One word more about the City book-keepers and clerks. With their scanty incomes—God knows sometimes how hardly earned—these men have to support, by direct or indirect taxation, the Barnacles in their affluent ease. But one cannot easily see how the Barnacles, with their gilded indolence and their co-operative stores, help to lighten the load of the City clerk or book-keeper.

As regards the Post Office—towards which I entertain a signal aversion, while my fondest

thoughts fly to the F. O.—I hold that the clerks there are very much more worked, and very much less paid, than the clerks in other offices. But compared with other professions, I imagine that they have a fairly easy time of it.

The position of a man in any employ outside the Service is always precarious. It takes years for him to learn his business. He may be thrown out of work at any moment by the failure of his employers or by the pressure of competition. The higher he reaches the harder he has to work. He has but scanty leisure in his early years, and too often none at all towards the end. He has no hope of pension, and small prospect of assistance should sickness overtake him and disable him in the race.

How different the case with the Civil Service! From the outset the hours are short, the labour light, and the leisure abundant. The clerk commonly starts at once with £80 or £100 a year, although he has served no apprenticeship; and he can look forward with confidence that his salary will rise—nay, that it *must* rise—to the higher hundreds—perhaps

cross over the line of the thousands—and that he will be able to retire in the prime of manhood with an excellent pension. If he is in a department where the organization is good and promotion by increments well sustained, he may look forward and say: ‘Next year, if alive, I shall have a rise of £15; the following year £15 more; the year after another £15, and then I shall be among the twenties.’ If he is sick, there is almost unlimited sick-leave; if he is idle, he can secure to himself unstinted holidays. Should he turn out a lazy fellow, or a fool, it is next to impossible for him to be dislodged from the Service; and it is only by gross insubordination, or by outrageous misconduct, that his dismissal can be brought about. In bad years, as in good, his salary is the same. Bad trade never affects him—nay, it improves his position, because it is notorious that in times of depression in business the prices of things are low, and consequently the spending power of the sovereign greater. Even his commonplace whine about the depreciation of gold is a mere musty delusion. Whoever will carefully compile a list of prices of manu-

factures and food of this year, and compare it with that of the last decade and of the last generation, will find that the spending power of a Barnacle's salary is no worse; nay, that it is, on the whole, very considerably better than it used to be.

What, then, would I recommend in regard to the reorganization of the Public Service? That, I must reserve for another occasion, when I have acquired such data respecting the whole machinery of government in this and other countries as will afford me a basis for my suggestions. But, in the meanwhile, I may give utterance to a few remarks.

Most decidedly would I oppose any further enlargement of the salaries which Civil Service clerks enjoy, and which they are always clamouring to have increased. I would also ask that, instead of creating fancy reorganizations to fit batches of departments, attempts should be made to evolve reorganization out of the departments themselves. Reform should not be effected wholesale, but in a retail manner. It should be a careful seat-to-seat reform — and the various branches of work should be grouped, or

further distributed, and labour - saving machinery should be more largely made use of. Instead of reforming committees sitting in a room, hearing evidence from representative Barnacles—fancy Hobble, Tuttle, Podlets, Poodle, and Fitznoodle giving evidence!—and theorizing from such evidence, the members should go among the desks and stools, and apportion to each man his proper share of labour. There should be neither a Lower Division Clerk caste, nor should the existing Writer System be allowed to remain longer in operation. I have laid it down as a general rule that mechanical work cannot be separated from mental work in an office, and to have two classes of men to perform one class of labour is only to breed discontent, disgust, and confusion. The work that is now given to Writers should be apportioned out to Barnacle clerks on entering the Service; it should constitute their apprenticeship, and their commencing salaries should be very much lower than what it is now. The existing farce of Writers at £78 a year teaching boys at £100 their work, should be done away with entirely.

But I recognise that there are times when departments, from a sudden expansion of business, require temporary additional labour. A flying body of supernumerary clerks is a necessity. How can that best be secured?

The plan I have to offer is simple. Every non-commissioned officer and private of good conduct in the army and marines, on quitting the Service, should have his name registered at Cannon Row, and be eligible for the extra work in the public departments. If of indifferent education he should be eligible as messenger or hall-porter. If of fair education and a good writer—and there are few non-commissioned officers who do not combine both these qualifications—he should have his name put down as a supernumerary clerk. He should be also eligible for work in the various Admiralty yards and outport offices, as well as in London. The pay should be the same as that devised by Mr. Childers for Writers in 1866. A period of six months should be allowed him to decide whether he would have his name placed on the active register or not. There should be *absolutely no examination* beyond the mere test of reading and writ-

ing, and the first four rules of arithmetic, which are about all that a clerk needs in a public office.

The reason that the existing Writer System must necessarily prove a failure is because the State acquires the services of young men who are only starting in life, and who are impelled, by force of circumstances, to try and increase their scanty salary. As this cannot be done in the Service itself, they take up other avocations, and, having two masters to serve, the less rigorous one—the State—is neglected, and the work of the other is done in Government hours. By this system the State encourages the growth of the proletariat class, and young men who might have made excellent carpenters or mechanics are drawn into the Public Service, and trained into becoming lazy and indifferent clerks.

But in the employment of military and naval pensioners (my remarks apply to the navy just as much as to the army) the case is widely different. The soldier's active and aspiring days are over. He longs for quietness and ease. To him the regularity and

monotony of a public office are as agreeable as they are distasteful to the younger man commencing life. The £78 a year raises his pension to the proportion of an excellent income, and he is as satisfied with his lot as the needy Writer is just the opposite. Besides, the connection of our retired non-commissioned officers and soldiers with Cannon Row would render them accessible at a moment's notice and they would not be dispersed all over the country as they are now. Reserve men would not have to be withdrawn from private pursuits, and afterwards cast adrift to beg, or steal, or starve, as, to the disgrace of England, was the case at the close of the Berlin Congress. And the system I propose would give that encouragement to men to enter the army which is so essential in a non-conscription country like our own, with Imperial interests growing more important and more menaced every day, and requiring a larger and a stronger army to defend them.

THE END.





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